THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

SAINT JOHN EUDES

THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

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THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

PART I

THE HEART OF MARY

CHAPTER I

"MATER ADMIRABILIS" (MOTHER MOST ADMIRABLE)

THE Heart of the most Blessed Virgin may well be called admirable or wonderful, for its depths are full of wonders, and no one but her Son Jesus can understand them perfectly, or speak of them fittingly. Jesus, the only Son of God and the only Son of Mary, having chosen this incomparable Virgin from amongst all creatures to be His Mother, Nurse and Guardian, and having in His infinite goodness given her to us to be our Queen, our Mother, and our Refuge in every need, He wishes us to honour and love her as He does. He has exalted and honoured her above

all men and Angels. He wills that we likewise should render more respect and veneration to her than to all Angels and Saints.

Jesus being our Head and we His members, in consequence of which union we should be animated with His spirit, follow His inclinations, walk in His footsteps, continue His life on earth and the exercise of the virtues He there practised, He also wishes that our devotion towards His holy Mother should be a continuation of His in her regard, and that we should be animated with the sentiments of honour, submission and affection He had for her when on earth, and which He will have for all eternity in Heaven. Next to His Eternal Father she always has held and will ever hold the first place in His heart as the chief object of His love: and His desire is that, after God, she should be the first object of our devotion and veneration. Consequently, after the service we owe to His Divine Majesty, we cannot render Him a greater one, or do anything more pleasing to Him than to serve and honour His most holy Mother.

But because we cannot give our love and esteem to anyone without knowing that which makes them worthy of both,

the boundless zeal with which Mary's Only Begotten Son is fired on behalf of the interests of His dearest Mother makes Him take the greatest pains to manifest to us even in this valley of darkness, through the medium of the Holy Fathers and the Holy Scriptures, some faint glimpse of the unparalleled perfection with which He has enriched her, reserving the full vision of the reality, which will indescribably surpass any knowledge we can have here, for the City of Light—Heaven. Amongst these divine utterances I have found one in the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse, which is an epitome of the highest praises we could bestow on or even conceive of this wondrous Queen. It is contained in these words: "*Signum magnum apparuit in cælo.*"* A great sign, a marvellous prodigy, a stupendous miracle has appeared in the Heavens: a Woman clothed with the sun, having the moon beneath her feet, and bearing on her head a crown of twelve stars. What is this great prodigy? Who is this miraculous woman? St. Epiphanius,† St. Augustine,‡ St. Bernard,§ and many other Doctors,

* Apoc. xii. 1. † Heres. 78.
‡ De symbolo, lib. iv.
§ Sermo in *Signum Magnum.*

agree that it is the Queen of women, the Sovereign Lady of men and Angels, the Virgin of virgins, she who bore in her virginal womb a perfect man, the Man-God: "*A woman hath encompassed a man*" (Jer. xxxi. 22). She appeared in the Heavens because she came from Heaven, because she is Heaven's most illustrious masterpiece, because she is the Empress of Heaven, the joy and glory of Heaven, in whom there is naught but what is celestial: and who, even when dwelling corporally on earth, had her whole mind and thoughts, heart and affections continually in Heaven.

She is clothed with the Sun of the Divinity, and with all the perfections of the Divine Essence by which she is so surrounded, filled and penetrated as to be completely transformed by the light, wisdom, power, goodness, holiness and all the other sublime attributes of God, as we shall see more fully hereafter.

The moon is at her feet to show that all the world is beneath, and God alone above her, and that she has absolute power over all created things.

She is crowned by twelve stars to represent all the virtues that shone in her so pre-eminently; all the mysteries of her life,

which are as so many stars, much more luminous than all the lights of the Heavens; all the privileges God has given her, the least of which incomparably surpasses whatever is most brilliant in the firmament, and the united glory of the whole army of saints in Heaven or on earth, who may with more right be entitled to the title of her crown and glory, than the Philippians referred to as being the crown and joy of St. Paul.*

But why does the Holy Spirit style her a great sign, *Signum magnum?* It is to make us understand that she is wholly miraculous; in order to publish everywhere the marvels with which she is filled: to point her out to all the inhabitants of Heaven and earth as a subject of admiration, and to make her the delight of Angels and men.

For this same reason the Holy Spirit has caused the faithful throughout the entire universe to sing in her honour this glorious eulogium: *Mater admirabilis.*

O Mother most admirable, with good cause art thou so called, for truly thou art admirable in everything and in every way. Admirable in the angelic beauty and the seraphic purity of thy virginal body;

* *Cf.* Phil. iv. 1.

admirable in the most eminent sanctity of thy blessed soul; admirable in all the faculties of both one and the other, of which thou hast ever made a most holy use, for the glory of the All-holy God.

Admirable art thou in all thy thoughts, the one object of which was always to please God alone: in thy words, which were like unto the words of God, conformably to the inspired precept: "If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God";* in thy actions, all of which have been consecrated to His Divine Majesty.

Admirable art thou in thy sufferings which made thee worthy to be associated with Our Saviour in the work of the redemption of the world.

Admirable in every state and in all the mysteries of thy life which are as so many mighty depths containing untold wonders.

Admirable in thy Immaculate Conception which is wholly miraculous.

Admirable in thy holy birth which has been a subject of indescribable and never ending joy to the whole universe.

Admirable in thy holy name of Mary which contains in itself a world of deep and wondrous meaning.

* 1 Pet. iv. 11.

Admirable in thy Presentation in the Temple, when but three years old,* after having at that tender age forsaken the house of thy Father and Mother—so holy a Father and Mother, too—and having entirely renounced self and all things else in order to consecrate thyself wholly to God in His holy Temple.

Admirable in the holy use thou madest of all the time during which thou didst live with the holy virgins and widows who dwelt there in community; and admirable in the rare example thou didst give them by the excellent practice of every kind of virtue.

Admirable in thy holy and angelic marriage with St. Joseph.

Admirable in thy heavenly conversation with St. Gabriel when he announced to thee the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation.

Admirable in all the wonders that took place within thee at the happy moment when this incomparable mystery was accomplished.

Admirable in every moment of the nine months that the Word Incarnate dwelt

* This is merely a pious belief, as there is no authoritative teaching of the Church on the question of the age of Mary at the time of the Presentation.

within thee as the only Son of His Mother Mary.

Admirable in every step of the journey thou didst take to visit thy cousin St. Elizabeth.

Admirable in every word of the inspired Canticle that broke forth from thee after thou hadst greeted her.

Admirable in all the miraculous effects of light, grace and sanctification wrought by thee in the soul of the infant John the Baptist and in the hearts of his Father and Mother during the three months or thereabouts that thou didst remain in their house.

Admirable in every step thou didst take when going from Nazareth to Bethlehem, there to bring forth the Saviour of the world, steps that I revere with my whole heart and with all possible respect, kissing in spirit the ground on which thou didst tread, and every print of thy sacred feet.

Admirable in all the miracles wrought when thou gavest birth to thy Divine Child.

Admirable in the Circumcision of thy Son, with its painful blood-shedding.

Admirable in the imposition of the most holy Name of Jesus which thou didst bestow

on Him through St. Joseph, according to the order thou hadst received from the Eternal Father through the medium of St. Gabriel.

Admirable in the mystery of His Epiphany—His manifestation to the three Kings who found the Babe of Bethlehem with His most holy Mother, and who adored Him in her arms.

Admirable in the profound humility and wondrous obedience by which thou didst submit thyself to the law of Purification, and in the incredible charity with which thou didst offer to the Eternal Father, in the Temple, His well-beloved and only-begotten Son, that He might one day be immolated on the Cross in expiation of the crimes of all mankind.

Admirable in all the extraordinary events which took place in the journey thou didst make with thy adorable Child, and St. Joseph, thy spouse, from Nazareth to Egypt and from Egypt to Nazareth, in order to rescue the Saviour of the world from the fury of Herod, who sought to kill Him.

Admirable wert thou, O Mother of Jesus, in thy resignation to the bitter sorrow which filled thy heart and the unspeakable joy which succeeded it, when thou

didst lose thy dear Child in the Temple of Jerusalem, and three days later didst find Him there again in the midst of the Doctors.

Admirable in thy most sweet and holy intercourse with that well-beloved Son during the first thirty years of His life when He seemed to be chiefly occupied with thee, and in sanctifying thee more and more. Oh, who can tell, who can conceive the mighty and wondrous things that passed between the Son of Mary and the Mother of Jesus during that long period?

Admirable wert thou, O blessed Mother, in the holy use thou didst make of the deprivation of that same Son's presence during the forty days of His retirement in the desert, and in the suffering thou didst endure in solitude like unto His during that same period.

Admirable in the part that thy unparalleled charity caused thee to take in His first miracle, wrought at the marriage feast in Cana.

Admirable in the great fruit thou didst draw from His holy preaching and in the special honour thou didst pay to all the mysteries of His public life.

Admirable in the large share He gave thee in His Cross and in all His sufferings.

Admirable in the sacrifice thou didst make of Jesus Himself, with so much sorrow and love at the foot of the Cross, for the entire human race, even including those who crucified Him.

Admirable in that thou didst contribute towards His glorious Resurrection by thy ardent prayers.

Admirable in the altogether indescribable meeting which took place when thy Son—and such a glorious Son—on the day of His Resurrection visited His peerless Mother before all others.

Admirable in the benefits that accrued to thee from His triumphant Ascension.

Admirable in the sublime dispositions with which thou didst receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the stupendous effects He operated in thy soul.

Admirable in the most ardent zeal and incomparable charity thou didst exercise towards the newly-born Church during the period of thy stay here below after the Ascension of thy Son.

Admirable in every moment of thy life, each of which was full of marvels and all employed in the service and for the love of the King of Ages.

Admirable in thy holy death, which

ought rather to be styled life than death.

Admirable in thy miraculous resurrection, thy glorious Assumption, and Coronation, when thou wast established at thy Son's right hand, as the everlasting Queen of Heaven and the Sovereign Empress of the Universe.

Admirable in the absolute power thy Son has given thee over all His possessions, spiritual and corporal, temporal and eternal.

Admirable in the immense share thou hast in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, for that Eucharistic Body is derived from thee.

Admirable in the incomprehensible charity with which thou dost continue to give us individually, with thy Son, in this Divine Sacrament, the boundless treasures thou gavest to all men in general by the mystery of the Incarnation.

Admirable in that supremely glorious and happy life which thou hast had in Heaven since thy entrance thereto, and which will be thine for all eternity.

Admirable likewise in all the virtues thou didst practise when on earth in the most sublime degree conceivable.

Admirable in thy lively faith, thy firm

hope, thy most pure love of God, in the perfection of thy charity towards men, in thy profound humility, thy exact obedience, thy invincible patience and all thy other Christian virtues.

Admirable in all the pre-eminent gifts with which God has adorned thee in thy quality of eldest and infinitely loved Daughter of the Eternal Father, and as Mother of the Son of God, as Spouse of the Holy Ghost, as Sanctuary of the most Blessed Trinity, treasury and dispenser of Divine Grace, Queen of men and Angels, Mother of Christians, Consoler of the afflicted, Advocate of sinners, Refuge of the miserable, and Sovereign Lady of the Universe and of all creatures.

Admirable, finally, in thy truly singular privilege and the unique prerogatives, unshared by any other creature, with which God has honoured thee. For is it not a subject of singular admiration to see a creature giving birth to Him who created her, giving being to *Him Who Is*, and life to Him from whom she received it? To see a star producing a sun, a Virgin bringing forth a child—a Virgin who is at once the daughter and mother of her Creator?

Is it not a wondrous prodigy that a

daughter of Adam, the sinner, should conceive the Saint of Saints, God Himself, that she should be Mother of that Son of whom God is the Father, and be able to say in the words of the Eternal Father: "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee."*

Have not Heaven and earth cause to be ceaselessly lost in amazement to see a Maiden of fifteen years of age, bearing within her that which the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, feeding and nourishing with her own substance Him who is Eternal Life and the principle of all life, carrying in her arms Him who upholds all things by the power of His Word, caring for, ruling and governing the Creator, the Preserver and Governor of the Universe, and having the powers and authority of a mother over the only Son of God, who is co-equal with His Father? What prodigies and miracles! Truly it is not without reason that the Holy Ghost styles the Blessed Virgin: "*Signum Magnum*,"† a great miracle!

* Ps. ii. 7. † Apoc. xii. 1.

CHAPTER II

THE ETERNAL FATHER'S LOVE OF MARY

THE first foundation and primary source of devotion to the most pure Heart of the Blessed Virgin is the love of the Eternal Father, the incomparable and incomprehensible predilection He bears towards the sweet Mother of His Divine Son.

This love has caused Him to give us some beautiful types and excellent representations of the Immaculate Heart of that holy Mother. To this Almighty Father is especially attributed the Creation of the world, as also the establishment and guidance of the Old Law, and it pleased Him to picture to us and foreshadow in His creatures throughout the universe, and in all the mysteries, sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Law, Him by whom He made all things, and by whom He willed to restore and repair all things, Jesus Christ, Who is the end and perfection of that same Law. Wherefore His Eternal Father appointed that He should be compared in the Scriptures to the Heavens, the sun, the rain, the dew, the fountain, the river, the sea, the earth, the eagle, the lion, the lamb, the rock, the lily, the vine,

and wine, and wheat and other similar things which are all pictures and figures of the Man-God, and His different qualities and perfections. Similarly, the Manna, the Paschal Lamb, the sacrifices and other ceremonial rites of the Mosaic Law were foreshadowings of Christ and the mysteries He would accomplish on earth. In the same way God the Father has taken a singular pleasure in representing to us, both in the physical world and the law of Moses, Her whom He had chosen from all eternity to be the Mother of our Divine Redeemer. "She it is," says St. Jerome,* "whom the Prophets foretold long before her birth, whom the Patriarchs pointed out under various figures and whom the Evangelists have made known to us."

St. John Damascene says† that the terrestrial Paradise, the ark of Noah, the burning bush, the tables of the law, the ark of the Covenant, the golden vessel which contained a portion of the manna, the golden candlestick which was within the tabernacle, the table of the loaves of proposition, Aaron's rod and the Babylonian furnace, were all figures of this incomparable Virgin.

* Serm. de Assumpt.

† Orat. 1 de Dormit. Mariæ.

Hugh of St. Victor goes still further when he says:* "There is no doubt that all that is praiseworthy and excellent in the Scriptures and in all creatures may be employed in praise of Mary, Mother of God. Thus she is the day-dawn, ushering in the true Sun, a flower also in beauty, in sweetness resembling the honey-comb, in humility the violet. She is the rose of charity, the lily of purity, a vine filling Heaven and earth with her delicious fruit, a perfume composed of all kinds of aromatic odours, the sweet scent of which is spread throughout the whole universe. She is an impregnable fortress, an unassailable rampart and tower, an impenetrable shield, an unshakable column, a spouse of inviolable fidelity, a friend whose love is beyond compare, a Mother whose fruit is wholly divine, a Virgin of immaculate integrity, a Princess in power and dignity, a Queen in majesty, innocent as a sheep, pure and spotless as a lamb, simple as a dove, and chaste as a love-bird."

St. Bernard says still more, as we shall see by the following extract.† "The Sovereign Lady of all things," he says in

* Serm. 34, de diversis.

† Serm. 3, super Salve. *Cf.* "Le Cœur Admirable," lib. ii., c. 1.

his third sermon on the *Salve*, "is not only a heavenly firmament more stable than all other firmaments, but she has various other names, and is represented and typified by many other things. She is the tabernacle of God, His temple, His dwelling place, His chamber . . . . the ark of the deluge, the dove bringing the olive branch of peace, the ark of the Covenant, the miraculous rod of Moses, the golden vessel containing the manna, yea, and even the manna itself. She is the flowering rod of Aaron, the fleece of Gedeon, the gate of Ezechiel, the Morning Star, the aurora announcing the rising sun, a burning and shining lamp, the trumpet which urges on the soldiers of Christ to the combat, and strikes fear into their enemies; a lofty eminence, a fountain in the midst of gardens, the lily of the valley, . . . the pillar of cloud and fire, the promised land flowing with milk and honey; the star of the sea, a barque given us by God that we may safely cross the perilous ocean of this world, in whose track we must follow in order to arrive safely in port. She is a heavenly net, of which God makes use in fishing for souls, . . . the Palace of the great King, His Council chamber, His fortress, His

army. . . . She is the dearly loved sheep of the Sovereign Shepherd, the Mother and nurse of His other sheep and lambs. She is the tree bearing the fruit of life in the terrestrial Paradise, . . . a pearl of inestimable price, the golden candlestick in the House of God, . . . the crown of the eternal King. She is the cedar of Libanus, the cypress of Mount Sion, the palm of Cades, the rose of Jericho, the beautiful olive tree planted by the running waters. She is the sweet-scented balm, the choice and exquisite myrrh, the incense which spreads its perfume on all sides. She is the spikenard, the saffron and the sweet cane of which the Holy Spirit makes mention in the 4th chapter of the Canticle of Canticles. . . . And to conclude, she is filled with the grace of God, and it was through her medium that the world was redeemed, the Word made Flesh, God abased, and man exalted." So speaks St. Bernard.

Richard of St. Laurent goes yet further and gives more than four hundred instances,* taken from Holy Scripture and elsewhere, of objects which represent the person, mysteries, qualities and virtues of the holy Mother of God.

* De laudib. Mariæ, lib. i. *et seq.*

For it is well to observe that as the Eternal Father was not satisfied with portraying the person of His Son Jesus in that of Abel, Noah, Melchisedech, David and many other Saints who lived before His coming on earth, but willed also to give us many beautiful pictures of the different mysteries of His life, as of His divine espousals with our human nature through the Mystery of the Incarnation, of His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension; so in the same way He did not consider it sufficient to prefigure and represent to us the holy Mother of His dearly-loved Son in the person of Mary the sister of Moses and Aaron, and by the Prophetess Deborah, the wise Abigail . . . the chaste and generous Judith, the beautiful and holy Esther, but He would also put before us types and striking pictures of her qualities, her virtues, the mysteries of her life, and even of the noblest faculties of her virginal body.

This we see in many places of Holy Scripture, notably in the 24th chapter of Ecclesiasticus and in the Canticle of Canticles, where her Immaculate Conception is represented by the lily springing up in the midst of thorns, without receiving any injury thereby: "Sicut lilium inter

spinas."* Her birth is typified by the aurora which ends the night and ushers in the day;† her Assumption into Heaven by the ark of the Covenant, which St. John, in the 11th chapter of his Apocalypse testifies to having seen therein;‡ the sublime pre-eminence of her dignity, power, and sanctity is pictured by the height of the cedars of Libanus. "Quasi cedrus exaltata sum in Libano."§ Her charity is typified by the rose;‖ her mercy by the olive,¶ her virginity by the closed gate of the Temple shown by God to the Prophet Ezechiel;** her hair by the royal garments,†† her eyes by the eyes of doves,‡‡ and the pools of Hesebon,§§ her cheeks by those of the turtle-dove,‖‖ and her neck by a tower of ivory.¶¶

But, above all, our Heavenly Father has been pleased to put before us many beautiful types and wonderful pictures of her most pure Heart,—many, I say, to show us how dear and precious to Him is this most lovable Heart, and because the rare and wondrous perfections with which it is

* Cant. ii. 2. † Cant. vi. 9. ‡ Apoc. xi. 19.
§ Ecclus. xxiv. 13. ‖ Ecclus. xxxix. 17.
¶ Ecclus. xxiv. 19. ** Ezech. xliv. 2.
†† Cant. vii. 5. ‡‡ Cant. i. 4. §§ Cant. vii. 4.
‖‖ Cant. i. 9. ¶¶ Cant. vii. 4.

endowed being almost countless, they can only be depicted and represented by a multitude of figures and types.

Where are these figures and types of the Admirable Heart of the Mother of Fair Love to be found? Amongst a great number of others I notice twelve of special excellence, six in the chief parts of the Universe, that is to say, in the Heavens, the sun, the earth, the fountain which watered the whole earth, of which mention is made in the 2nd chapter of Genesis, in the sea and in the terrestrial Paradise. The others are six objects of special note in the world between the time of Moses and the Death of our Lord Jesus Christ, namely: the burning bush seen by Moses on Mount Horeb; King David's mysterious harp, mentioned in Holy Scripture; Solomon's magnificent throne; the wondrous Temple of Jerusalem; the mighty furnace spoken of in the 3rd chapter of Daniel, and the holy Mount of Calvary. These are twelve beautiful types or pictures of the august Heart of the Queen of Heaven. Let us reflect on them all in turn, so as to incite ourselves to bless and praise the Divine Artist whose work they are, to revere and admire the rare perfections of the prototype of which they are

but images, and to conceive a high esteem of the devotion to the spotless Heart of the Mother of God, which is a very solid and thoroughly well-founded devotion, the primary source of which is to be found in the love of the Eternal Father, who Himself has given us these figures of it.

CHAPTER III

THE ADORABLE HEART OF JESUS IS ONE OF THE CHIEF FOUNDATIONS OF DEVOTION TO THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

We have good reason for considering the Sacred Heart of our dear Redeemer as the second foundation of devotion to that of His holy Mother, for the ardent love with which the adorable Heart of Jesus was inflamed towards that of Mary, moved Him to preach the devotion to us in two ways:—by word and example.

Would you know how the only Son of God and the only Son of Mary exhorts us to venerate the lovable Heart of His glorious Mother by His words? Listen then to those He once addressed to St. Mechtilde, one of the most illustrious

daughters of St. Benedict, who lived in the year 1300, and whose books are approved by a great number of doctors. You will there see how our Divine Saviour wished to be the first preacher of devotion to the virginal Heart of His Blessed Mother, and how He gave St. Mechtilde the first lessons as to the way it should be saluted and honoured. One day during Advent, when she was longing much to salute the Mother of God in some manner that would greatly please her, Jesus, the well-beloved Son of Mary, gave the Saint the following holy and beautiful instruction:*

"You will salute the Virginal Heart of My holy Mother," He said, "as a sea, full of heavenly graces and as a treasury filled with all manner of good things for mankind.

"You will salute it as the most pure heart that has ever existed, except Mine own, for she was the first to make the vow of virginity. You will salute it as the most humble heart of all pure creatures, because by her humility she drew Me forth from the bosom of My Father, and merited to conceive Me within her, by the power of the Holy Ghost. You

* Lib. spec. gratiæ, lib. i., c.

will salute her as excelling all others in her devotion and ardent desire for My Incarnation and earthly birth, for the fervour of her desires and sighs drew Me within her and thus brought about the salvation of mankind.

"You will salute her as surpassing all in burning love of God and her neighbour, and as being prudent beyond all others, for she stored up in her heart everything that took place in My infancy, in My youth and manhood, to her great interior profit.

"You will salute her as being most patient, for she was transpierced with a thousand darts of sorrow both at the time of My Passion and afterwards, by the remembrance of My sufferings which never left her. You will salute her as being most faithful, for not only did she consent that I, her only Son, should be immolated, but she herself offered Me to the Eternal Father for the redemption of the world.

"You will salute her as excelling all in care, vigilance and zeal for My new-born Church; for the earnestness with which she prayed unceasingly for it can never be sufficiently prized or acknowledged. You will salute her as being the most assiduous and highly raised in contemplation, for it

is impossible to say how many graces and favours she has drawn down upon men by the force of her prayers."

Thus did our Lord speak to St. Mechtilde showing how pleasing to His Divine Majesty is devotion to the loving heart of his Blessed Mother, and how beneficial to those who practise it.

You will find in the salutation beginning "Ave Cor Sanctissimum," this manner of saluting the most holy Heart of our Lady.

But if we listen [in the depths of our heart] to the voice of this Divine Preacher of devotion to the most august Heart of Mary, He will tell us many other things full of instruction and consolation. Let us hearken then to Him.

It is I (He says) who alone can preach worthily that devotion which all hearts who love Me ought to have to the lovable Heart of My holy Mother, for it is I who am the principle and source of all that is great and marvellous in that abyss of miracles, and who consequently have a perfect knowledge of her eminent perfections. I also am the eldest Son of her Maternal Heart, on which account Mine is filled with a tender and filial love for her. As I am the first fruit of the love of My

Eternal Father, so am I also the First-born of the incomparable Heart of My dear Mother. This admirable Mother bore Me lovingly in her Heart before she conceived Me in her womb,* the sanctity of which had its origin in the sanctity and purity of her virginal Heart; nor would it have been worthy to bear Me had I not in the first place been formed and borne in her Heart by the excellence of its humility, purity and love. . . . This peerless Heart is of all pure creatures the most perfect work of my power and goodness, and by an incomprehensible miracle, I Myself am the masterpiece of her humility, by which she drew Me down from the adorable bosom of My Father where I was born from all eternity, that I should be born of her, My Virgin Mother, in the fulness of time.

Thus have I ever been and will be to all eternity the one object above all others of the affection of that maternal Heart, which is reciprocated by Me, for after My Eternal Father, it always has been and ever will be the first object of My love.

Wherefore, all who truly love Me ought

* "Prius et felicius in Corde quam in ventre concepit."—D. Leo, Serm. de Nat. Dom., et D. Aug. libro de *Sancta Virginitate*, c. 30.

to be very zealous in honouring and causing to be honoured as far as lies in their power, that Heart which I love more and which gives me more love and glory than all men and Angels.

For this reason have I willed to be Myself the preacher of a devotion that has been practised in past ages by so many of My Saints, and which is also practised now in many Churches in honour of that revered Heart. I it was who gave the first lesson on this subject to St. Mechtilde, one of the most illustrious daughters of the glorious Patriarch St. Benedict. It is I, again, who have aroused these same sentiments in your hearts, My dear children; I speak to all those who have a special veneration for that Pure Heart. It is I who have instilled into your hearts those ardent desires you have to render it all the honours it is My will it should receive. I know that as it is, next to My Eternal Father, the first object of the love of My Heart, so likewise it is, after God, the chief object of your holiest and most tender affections. Therefore have I given her to be in your midst as an inexhaustible fountain of blessings. I have given her to you as a sign in the Heavens to enlighten you in the dark gloom of this world, to warn you

in the frozen atmosphere of the winter of this mortal life, to rejoice and console you in the sadness, sorrows and miseries of this world, and to give you life and strength in the midst of the weariness and weakness of human frailty.

I have given her to you as a beautiful mirror in which you should often look at yourselves, in order to see the stains on your souls that you may efface them, putting in their place suitable adornments to please the eyes of My Divine Majesty.

I have given her to you as a tower of strength, an impregnable fortress, where you can take refuge and hide yourselves from the attacks of the enemies of your salvation.

I have given her to you as a burning furnace of divine love, into which you should plunge and be completely immersed, so as to be entirely consumed and changed into fire and flames of love for Him who is altogether a flaming fire of love for you. I have given her to you as a perfect example of the respect, love and obedience you ought to have towards those who hold God's place for you on earth.

I have given her to you as a fountain of wine, milk and honey, whence you may draw that charity, sweetness and meekness

with which you should converse with one another.

I have given her to you as a heavenly book, a book of life, which you should unceasingly study in order to know perfectly and ardently love the peerless beauty of all Christian virtues, the practice of which gives true life to the soul. But above all you should study in this book the wondrous excellence of holy humility, as well as the ways of practising it and the means of eradicating entirely from your hearts the hateful serpent of pride and vanity which effects such terrible ravages not only in the souls of the children of perdition, but also in the hearts of My own children.

I give her to you as a holy Rule which will make you all Saints if you keep it faithfully; the rule of the heavenly life you ought to lead, the rule of the holy habits and virtues with which you should clothe yourselves, of the Gospel maxims you have to follow, of the holy dispositions with which you should do all your actions, of the feelings and affections that ought to be in your hearts, that is to say, the rule to be observed in the love and hatred, the joys and sadness, the fears and desires that you should have in order to

please Me and sanctify yourselves. I have given her to you as an immense sea of all kinds of graces whence you ought to draw all those of which you stand in need every hour, every moment, at all times, and on all occasions, in order to avoid the innumerable snares with which Satan has covered the whole earth, and that you may serve God and walk in His presence in justice and holiness all the days of your life. I have given her to you as a precious vessel full of the heavenly manna and the nectar of Paradise, in order to feed your hearts, even in this world, with the food of Angels, and to inebriate them so with the wine of Heaven that you may entirely forget all earthly and temporal things, and take your sole pleasure in those that are celestial and eternal. Such have ever been the life and the love of My holy Mother, who is also yours. Strive to imitate her and she will love you and take you to her own heart.

I have also given you that royal Heart of your great Queen to be the Monarch of your hearts, by which they should be ruled and governed according to the most adorable Will of Thy Father, so that you may be entirely conformed to it in all things.

Again, I have given you this admirable Heart of My dearest Mother, which is but one with Mine, to be truly your heart also, in order that the children may have but one heart with their Mother, and the members have no other heart than that of their Head, that so you may serve, adore and love God with a heart worthy of His Infinite greatness: "*Corde magno et animo volenti*"—with a heart immense and infinite, a heart all pure and holy, and that you may sing His divine praises and do all your actions in the spirit, the love, the humility and all the other dispositions of that same Heart. But in order that this may be so, you must entirely give up your own heart, that is, your own ideas, self-love, and self-will. Labour then to rid yourselves of this earthly heart which is evil and depraved, and you will obtain one altogether celestial, holy and divine.

Finally, I have given you this admirable Heart as an inestimable treasure, containing every sort of good. It is for you, My dearest children, to implant deeply in your hearts a high esteem, a profound respect, a most singular affection for his treasure, and to preserve it with the utmost care, so as not only to continue in, but even to increase the veneration you bear towards

a Heart so holy and lovable. It is to urge you to this that I have said these things. Keep them in your heart and practise them faithfully. By this means you will be the true children of the Heart of My holy Mother, and you will be according to Mine. My eyes and My Heart will ever watch over your needs. You will then be truly My own, My joy and delight. You will be dear to My Heart, and I will prepare an eternal abode for you in It, and in that of My holy Mother, which is but one with Mine, where you will dwell for ever, living the life of Our Heart, possessing all the treasures It contains, and plunged into the depths of Its joys you will find therein your Paradise. . . .

In the love of this Heart you will with Us, love, bless and eternally glorify the supreme, sovereign, infinite love, which is that of the Most Holy Trinity. May it be ever blessed, adored and loved by all men and Angels.

Infinite thanks to Thee, my dearest Jesus, for Thy divine exhortation. Do Thou Thyself inprint on our hearts what Thou hast taught us, and give us the grace to make the good use of it we ought.

CHAPTER IV

THE LOVE OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS FOR THAT OF HIS BLESSED MOTHER

After having listened to the divine words of our Saviour exhorting us to love and honour the most lovable Heart of Mary, let us see with what affection His own adorable Heart regards it, as we shall learn even more from His deeds than from His words. For what words could express or depict the smallest spark of that burning love with which He is inflamed towards the maternal Heart of Mary?

He has shown how He loves and honours it by having exalted it above all other hearts, making choice of it wherein to establish the august empire of His glory, and the magnificent triumph of His love.

He so loved and honoured it as to make it a heavenly abode more exalted and brilliant than all the Heavens, and in which He is more glorified and loved than in the empyreal Heavens.

He so loved and honoured it that at the very first moment of its creation He

wrought in it several great miracles, as we shall see hereafter; and He has communicated to it so abundant an outpouring of His own divine perfections that it is the best, the noblest, the most perfect and powerful, the wisest and holiest, the most just, the most merciful, the most gracious and generous, the richest and happiest, the most glorious, most lovable, and admirable of all hearts.

To understand this clearly we must bear in mind what St. Denis the Areopagite teaches us:* that the divine Love reflects in the hearts of the Angels, as in so many beautiful mirrors, the Divine attributes, in different ways according to the diversity of the various Orders of those blessed Spirits.

Thus, this adorable Love depicts Itself in the inflamed and burning affections of the Seraphim. For, says St. Denis,† the names by which these celestial spirits are known, denote the qualities and perfections proper to them, and by which they resemble God. Now the word "Seraphim," as the same Saint tells us, signifies Spirits who burn and are on fire.

In the Cherubim He imprints a beautiful

* De cœlesti Hierarchia, c. 3, § 1.

† *Ibid.*, c. 7, § 1.

image of the knowledge and wisdom of God, for the word "Cherubim" means a plentitude of knowledge and a superabundance of wisdom.

In the Thrones, Divine Love establishes the resemblance, the throne and the empire of the most sublime and exalted Majesty of God and His unshaken stability: for the holy Thrones, according to St. Denis, are spirits raised to great heights, whose place is nigh unto Him whom the Holy Scriptures call the *Most High.* Near Him they dwell with such resolute constancy that nothing can displace them. They are like thrones and seats for God, and have very great and extensive capacities, being ever ready to receive the Divinity Who reposes in them.

The holy Dominations bear an excellent representation of the Sovereignty and supreme dominion of the great God.

In the Virtues, Divine Love portrays a vivid resemblance to the Virtue and Might of God, for the name, says St. Denis,* denotes a manly strength, vigorous and unconquerable, which they manifest in all the functions of their office, being perfect images of that Virtue from which all others flow as from their foun-

* De cœlesti Hierarchia, c. 8, § 1.

tain head, and which they unceasingly contemplate and glorify.

The holy Powers are made as perfect expressions of the adorable power of Him who is called *Almighty*. "*Omnipotens nomen Ejus.*" In the holy Principalities is engraven a living image of the Sovereignty of God, the name showing, as St. Denis again tells us, that imitating God they are capable of commanding and governing with decorum and order. They are ever occupied in contemplating and adoring that Princely Sovereignty of which they bear the likeness, and in manifesting its supreme authority over all things.

In the Archangels, Divine Love has established the throne of the Will of God, which they contemplate incessantly in order to reflect in themselves its divine lights and impress, as well as to convey its orders and behests not only to the Angels who are their inferiors, but also occasionally to men, especially to those who are employed in the highest and most important functions of Holy Church.

In the Angels is imprinted a living image of the Providence of God, for St. Denis says, as that adorable Providence governs all things, and provides for the

well-being and salvation of all the children of Adam in general, so, in imitation of this, the Holy Angels have the direction and government of men, and are employed in guarding and guiding them in the paths of grace.

It is thus Divine Love portrays and impresses the divine attributes on the inmost being of these blessed Spirits, and so each Order of Angels is dedicated and consecrated to some one of these adorable attributes, and is ever occupied in adoring, glorifying and imitating it, as far as possible, and also in exciting others to love and adore this divine object.

Now what Divine Love does in the Angels, the Only Son of Mary, Who is all love for His dearest Mother, has done in her pure Heart, but in a much more excellent way, for gathering together all the perfections of His Divinity which are divided amongst the various Angelic choirs, He united them in the most august Heart of the Angels' Queen; because having chosen her to be His Mother, it was necessary that the resemblance between such a Son and such a Mother should be perfect. Whence it comes that she, having made Him like to herself according to His Humanity, He,

her divine Son, willed to make her like Himself according to His Divinity. As the Eternal Father unceasingly communicates to Him all the divine attributes with such perfection that He is called the "Figure of His substance" and the "Image of the invisible God," so He, Jesus, makes the virginal Heart of His holy Mother, a participator in those same perfections which He receives from His Father, and in such fulness that her Heart bears a marvellous resemblance to the perfection of our adorable Saviour.

Yes, her incomparable Heart is a most clear and precious mirror, in which the Eternal Sun, which is Jesus, is perfectly reflected with all its beauty and perfection. By this means He renders that spotless Heart so admirable, lovable, and worthy of honour, that after our Lord, the God-Man, it is the first object of veneration in Heaven, as it ought to be the chief object of our devotion on earth.

CHAPTER V

THE HOLY GHOST IS THE THIRD FOUNDATION OF DEVOTION TO THE HEART OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

We have seen that the two first foundations of this devotion are the infinite love of the Eternal Father, and the Sacred Heart of the Son of God. We shall now see that the third foundation is the predilection of the Holy Ghost, which is all on fire with love for His Holy Spouse, Mary. It is this which moves Him to make known to us the inestimable treasures hidden in her Heart, so full of wonders, and loudly to proclaim them in various ways:

(1) Through the Sacred Scriptures. (2) Through the Holy Fathers of the Church, who are as Its mouthpieces. (3) Through the writings of many learned theologians. (4) Through the Sovereign Pontiffs and other Prelates of Holy Church who are the Vicars of our Lord Jesus Christ and the organs of the Divine Spirit. (5) By the example of a great number of Saints who have highly recommended this devotion.

"*Omnis gloria Filiae Regis ab intus.*" All the glory of the King's daughter is within.* It is the Holy Ghost who speaks thus, and by these words makes known to us that the Heart of the Holy Mother of God is a wellspring of blessings of every kind. In order to understand this clearly there are three things to be borne in mind which are greatly to the glory of the highly favoured Heart of our great Queen, and which are founded on these inspired words: "All the glory of the King's daughter is from within," that is, from her heart.

Who is this Daughter of the King? Well you know that it is the Queen of Heaven and earth, the Daughter of the King of Kings.

But what mean the words that all her glory proceeds from her Heart? They mean that this Heart is the source and principle of all the greatness, excellence and prerogatives with which she is adorned, of those super-eminent qualities which raise her above the level of all creatures: such for instance as her being the Daughter of the Eternal Father, the Mother of the Son, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, the temple of the most Holy

* Ps. xliv. 14.

Trinity, the Queen of Angels and of men, the Mother of Christians and the Empress of the universe.

They mean also that her immaculate Heart is the source of all the graces which accompany these prerogatives God has given her, of the holy use she has made of those graces, of the sanctity of her thoughts, of her sufferings and of all the mysteries of her life.

They mean that from that same Heart sprang all her practices of virtue, the holy use she made of the powers of her soul and body, and consequently of all the glory and happiness she possesses in Heaven. But how comes it that her Heart is the source of all these things? Know you not that it was the humility, the purity, the love and charity of her Heart that made her worthy to be the Mother of God, and consequently to possess the advantages and all that must necessarily accompany that high dignity? Know you not that the heart is the seat of love and charity, and that love and charity are the principle, the rule and the measure of all sanctity on earth, and consequently of all glory in Heaven? For this reason the Eternal Truth tells us in the holy Gospel (Matt. 15) that as the heart of man is the

seat of all evil, it is also the well-spring of all manner of good. It is from the heart, says the Son of God, that come forth evil thoughts, murders and blasphemies. And again He says: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil." (Luke vi. 45.) Hence we must conclude that the truly good heart of the holy Mother of God is the source of all in her that is great, holy, glorious and admirable. I also maintain that this same Heart is, after God, the source of all the excellence, holiness, glory, felicity and of everything that is great, precious and marvellous in the entire Church—militant, suffering and triumphant. How can this be? The reason is very clear. Do you not agree that all the graces and blessings of the Church, all the treasures of light, sanctity and glory that she possesses have come to her through the medium of our Blessed Lady? The learned and devout Abbot Rupert says that all the gifts earth hath received from Heaven are so many rivulets flowing from that sacred fountain, and so many fruits of that holy tree. It is a decree God has made in His Eternal Counsel, says St. Bernard, to give naught

to anyone which has not passed through Mary's hands. It is through her He has willed to give us every kind of good, says that same Saint. Yes, because He has willed to give us through her Him, Who is the Sovereign principle of all good, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Now by what means did Mary render herself so holy, so pleasing to His Divine Majesty that He chose her through whom to bestow on us that infinite Gift, which is the source of all other gifts He has ever made or will ever make to His Church, if not by the sanctity of her most humble, pure and charitable Heart?

CHAPTER VI

MARY'S HEART IS THE GUARDIAN OF THE MYSTERIES OF OUR LORD'S LIFE

THE Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin is the sacred depository and faithful guardian of the wonderful mysteries and inestimable treasures contained in our Lord's life. "Maria autem conservabat omnia verba haec conferens in corde suo"*

* Luke ii. 19.

(Mary kept all these words in her Heart, comparing them one with another).

Devotion to the Heart of our Blessed Lady is nothing new, for as we have seen it originated in the loving designs of the Most Holy Trinity. It is, also, as ancient as the Christian Religion and the holy Gospel, according to the testimony of the Evangelist, St. Luke, who mentions with honour that loving Heart in no less than two places in one chapter of his Gospel; for in the 19th verse of chapter 2 he says: "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart"; and in the 51st verse: "And His Mother kept all these words in her heart," so that this devotion began and is founded in the holy Gospel. For the Holy Spirit, Who dictated to the Evangelists all that they wrote, having willed that one of them should speak to us with honour and reverence of the virginal Heart of our Lord's Mother, representing it as the faithful guardian and sacred depository of the ineffable treasures contained in the life of our Divine Redeemer, doubtless it was for our imitation, and that we should pay unbounded honour to this pure and spotless Heart.

In order to move us thereto, let us consider those inspired words: "Mary kept

all these words, pondering them in her heart." To understand them properly we must remember that in the language of God *Verba* does not only signify words, but also things or matter, as we may see in the following passages: "Quod est verbum quod factum est?" "What is this matter that has come to pass." (2 Kings i. 4). "Ecce enim faciam verbum in Israel" (1 Kings iii. 2). "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel." "Quia postulasti verbum hoc." "Because thou hast asked this thing" (3 Kings iii. 11), etc., and it is in this way we must understand this passage: "Conservabat omnia verba haec." "She kept all these words"—that is, all these things, these facts. For there is this great difference between the words of men and those of God, men's words are such that they can be blown away by a breath of wind, and they frequently produce no effect: "Dicunt et non faciunt."* "They speak and do not." But the Words of God produce effects: "*Dixit, et facta sunt.*"† "He spoke and they were made." Let us say then that Mary preserved in her Heart all these

* Matt. xxxiii. 3. † Ps. xxxii. 9.

facts, all the marvellous things that took place in the life of our Lord.

St. Ambrose, commenting on this text, says:* "This holy Virgin ever bore in the depths of her Heart the mysteries of God, the mysteries of the Passion of her Son, and all the other things He did." She kept all these things in her Heart as sacred relics, worthy of singular veneration. She kept them as admirable effects of Her Son's love for His Father and us. She kept them as sacred fuel for that divine fire which her Son Jesus came to cast abroad on the earth in order to inflame our hearts with love. She kept them as the foundation stones on which that adorable Saviour wished to build His Church. She kept them as the miracles and incomprehensible works of the Almighty Goodness of God, which were to fill the Gospel history. She kept them as the ineffable mysteries and divine secrets of the New Testament and of the New Covenant between God and man. She kept them as the rich portion and the precious inheritance of the heirs of God, and as the fountain-head and source of those divine graces that were to be poured forth over the whole universe, and also

* *In ista verba:* Tuam ipsius animam.

of the immortal glory that was to shine with everlasting lustre in Heaven.

She kept them as immense treasures with which she wished to enrich all the inhabitants of Heaven and earth. She kept them as the bread and wine that were to be placed on the table of the Heavenly Father for the nourishment of His children, and as the manna which her well-beloved Son had brought from Heaven to make man live on earth the life of the Angels. She kept them—she who is the General of the armies of the great King—as celestial arms that she would put into the hands of her soldiers to fight and conquer the enemies of God and their salvation. She kept them as sacred torches to enlighten those who are enveloped in the darkness and shadow of death. She kept them as most salutary remedies, to cure our souls of all evils, and as most powerful means of filling them with good of every kind.

She kept all these words not only in her memory and her understanding but in her Heart—"in corde suo"—in that Heart which is a most worthy sanctuary of grace and virtue, an ocean of sanctity, a furnace of love and charity, and a paradise on earth in the sight of the Blessed Trinity.

She kept them not only in part, but "omnia," all of them, for in the first place she knew there was nothing little in what concerned our Lord, but that all in Him was great, divine, and admirable, and that not one of His steps, not a movement of His eyes, or the least of His thoughts but merited the adoration of men and Angels. Secondly, she knew that her Son Jesus had such love for men that He counted every hair of their heads, "Yea, the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Luke xii. 7), all their thoughts, all their footsteps. "Thou hast counted all my footsteps," says the Psalmist, every smallest action they do for love of Him, that He may crown it with eternal glory. He keeps them in His Heart as a precious treasure to be guarded as the apple of His eye, according to these words of Holy Writ: "The alms of a man are as a signet with him and shall preserve the grace of a man as the apple of the eye" (Ecclus. xvii. 18). Just as he who has a purse of diamonds guards it carefully as the apple of his eye, so God treasures very affectionately the alms or favours done to a poor man, even if it be but a glass of water.

Wherefore Our Blessed Lady always

had her eyes fixed on her beloved Son, and was ever vigilant and attentive to note everything concerning Him, even to the smallest details, in order not to lose a single one of these celestial pearls and heavenly diamonds which are of infinite value, and will be a source of happiness to, and evoke the praise and adoration of all the inhabitants of the Heavenly Jerusalem for endless ages. Mary concealed and preserved them in her virginal Heart, where, save in the Divine complacency of the Eternal Father, they were more worthily, holily, and gloriously honoured than in any other place, even than in the inmost being of the Seraphim, and where they also produced more admirable effects of love, light and sanctity than in the empyreal Heavens. And it is in her Heart that these inestimable treasures will abide through endless ages: it is there that all the Saints and Angels will contemplate, revere and glorify them for ever.

But what motive had that glorious Virgin in keeping all these things with such veneration in her Heart? It was her burning love for her Son and for us. She kept them thus in order to adore and glorify them unceasingly in the name of all those for whom these things were done,

and who nevertheless paid no attention to them. She preserved them so that one day they might be adored by the whole world, and in order that they might be so many inexhaustible fountains of grace and blessing for the members of God's household. She preserved them that she might transmit them into the hands of the holy Evangelists to be written in the Gospel for the benefit of the Christian Faith and Religion; and also that she might recount them to the holy Apostles, so that they might make them known and revered by the whole world.

Let us now see the meaning of the phrase: "Conferens in corde suo." "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her Heart"—weighing, comparing them. St. Chrysostom and several others of the holy Fathers say that the Blessed Virgin, having read in the Prophets their predictions concerning our Lord, compared them with those that were taking place before her eyes, admiring and reverencing the wondrous connection she recognised between them. St. Bernard is of opinion that this included the Angelic Salutation, the Incarnation of the Son of God, His painless Birth, the adoration of the Shepherds and the Kings, the Flight

into Egypt, and all the other mysteries of our Divine Redeemer's life, the perfect connection and conformity of which she noted with admiration.

It was thus that Holy Mary kept and pondered in her Heart all she saw of her well-beloved Son, and also all she heard from His Divine lips in their familiar intercourse, for it was revealed to St. Bridget* that when the adorable Child Jesus was dwelling with His holy Mother He disclosed to her many heavenly secrets, not only to add to her wisdom and enlightenment but also to enable her to teach and enlighten others. Hence she has been called the "Library of the Apostles," where they betook themselves, says St. Jerome, for information on many points of which they were ignorant.† What obligations, then, do we not owe to the loving Heart of our holy Mother for having preserved such great treasures for our benefit? Ought we not to revere her as the sacred depository and faithful guardian of the infinite treasures our Saviour acquired for us by His Precious Blood? Ought we not to honour her as a living and eternal Gospel in which the Holy

* Serm. Angel., c. 19.

† D. Hieron, Serm. de Assumpt.

Spirit has written in golden characters the admirable life of our Redeemer? What veneration should we not have for that holy Ark of the New Testament which contains a Heavenly manna, hidden from the children of this world, known and appreciated only by those whose hearts are consecrated to the love of Jesus, Son of Mary, and of Mary, Mother of Jesus.

PART II

CHARACTERISTIC VIRTUES AND PERFECTIONS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

CHAPTER I

ITS SPOTLESS PURITY

THE first glory of the most holy Heart of Mary is that it has always been spotlessly pure and free from all stain of sin of any kind. The Holy Spirit, long ages before Our Lady was conceived, foreseeing her entire life from its first to its last moment, beheld this holy Virgin adorned by Him with four very glorious titles, the first being that of Spouse, of that same Holy Spirit ("Veni, Sponsa Mea);* the second being "The City of God" ("Glorious things are said of thee, thou City of God");† the third, the title of "Daughter of the Eternal King" . . . ("Filia Principis");‡ and fourth, that of the "Valiant Woman."§ The Holy Ghost, I say, see-

* Cant. iv. 8. † Ps. lxxxvi. 2.
‡ Cant. vii. 1. § Prov. xxxi. 10.

ing her honoured with these four prerogatives, proclaims in the face of Heaven and earth, through the medium of the Holy Scriptures, firstly that she is all fair. "Tota pulchra es, amica mea";* wholly immaculate, "Immaculata"; and without spot, "et macula non est in te,"† such as becomes the one chosen Spouse of God. "Una est columba mea."‡ My dove is without bitterness and without sin, in comparison with whom all other souls are but servants. He declares, too, that the brilliancy of her beauty and sanctity is so marvellous that it is an object of delight to His Divine Majesty. "Quam pulchra es!" "How beautiful art thou!" (Cant. iv. 1).

Secondly, the most Blessed Trinity having chosen Our Lady and prepared her as a Holy City which He wished to constitute as a dwelling place for Himself more worthy and more holy than the empyreal Heavens, His Divine Majesty established the foundations of this glorious City on the summit of the holy mountains: "Fundamenta ejus in montibus sanctis,"§ that is to say, He raised this Blessed Virgin from the first moment of her exist-

* Cant. iv. 7. † *Ibid.*
‡ Cant. vi. 8. § Ps. lxxxvi. 1.

ence above all that is holiest and most perfect in Heaven and on earth.

Thirdly, being the Daughter, the one chosen Daughter *par excellence* of the Eternal Father, of whom He had full possession from the very first—"The Lord possessed me from the beginning of His ways,"*—she has always resembled that adorable Father as far as was in her power, by the superabundant fullness of grace He bestowed upon her, all her actions, without exception, from first to last, bearing the impress and character of the ways of the source of all holiness in an eminent degree.

Fourthly, being the valiant woman spoken of by Solomon, she is the leader of God's armies, the chief enemy of the infernal serpent, and is more feared by all the legions of hell than a great and powerful army drawn up in battle array would be by a handful of feeble opponents. "Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata."† "Terrible as an army set in array." She it is who has completely crushed the serpent's head: "Ipsa conteret caput tuum,"‡ that is to say, she has perfectly vanquished every

* Prov. viii. 22. † Cant. vi. 3.
‡ Gen. iii. 5.

sort of sin—mortal, venial, actual and original—which is specially designated by that odious head of the infernal serpent.

CHAPTER II

THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY IS A SEA OF GRACE

To understand the proposition contained in the heading of this chapter you must know that, according to the opinion of many great theologians, it is in the heart, that is, in the inmost depths of the Christian soul, that sanctifying grace dwells and exercises its power. There is established the throne of the empire, it extends over the three powers of the soul—memory, understanding and will: over all the faculties of the superior and inferior part, and over all the senses, interior and exterior. On the strength of this I affirm that the holy Heart of the Mother of God is a sea of grace, nor is it I alone who say it, but an Archangel, sent by God Himself from Heaven to announce to the Queen of Angels that the Divine Majesty has made choice of her to be the

Mother of His Son, who before all else declares to her that she is full of grace.

To understand how she came to be full of grace before the Incarnation of the Son of God, you must consider the following truths. Firstly, the Blessed Virgin, according to many distinguished theologians, was, at the moment of her Immaculate Conception, filled with such an eminent degree of grace that she surpassed in that respect the highest Seraphim and the greatest of all the Saints, even when they had attained their fullest perfection. Secondly, the Blessed Virgin was never idle, but always intent on God, and continually exercising her love of His Divine Majesty. And because she loved Him with her whole heart, her whole soul, with all her strength and to the full extent of the grace bestowed on her, that grace was doubled, if not from moment to moment, at least from hour to hour and perhaps oftener, in her soul, so that she had arrived at an indescribable and inconceivable degree of grace when St. Gabriel declared her to be "full of grace."

Now, if such was the case before our Blessed Lady conceived the Son of God, what must have been the abundance and fullness of grace poured out on her by

the Holy Spirit to fit her for giving birth to Him who was begotten of the Eternal Father before all ages, and for becoming the true Mother of such a Son. Certainly the dignity of the Motherhood of God being infinite, the grace bestowed on the Blessed Virgin to prepare her for giving being and life to one who was God, must have also been, in some way, infinite too, for St. Thomas assures us it was proportioned to that sublime dignity.

Now, if it is so great a thing to be Mother of God—and we cannot imagine anything greater for any creature—what an abundance of grace that same Holy Spirit must have poured into her Heart to enable her to continue worthily her office of Motherhood towards such a Son!

But who can conceive what that adorable Babe Himself, Who is infinitely rich, generous, and grateful, would bestow on her from whom He received His new being and life (a life infinitely more precious than that of all men and angels), as well as all the acts of love, adoration and praise she rendered Him unceasingly while within her? If Thou dost give an everlasting kingdom, O my Jesus, in return for a cup of water, offered to a poor man for love of Thee, what treasures and

graces wouldst Thou not continually pour into the Heart of Thy Holy Mother, Thou Who art an inexhaustible source of blessings, and who hast no greater desire than to communicate them, especially to that most pure Heart which opposed not the smallest obstacle to their reception?

But Mary not only exercised her office of Motherhood in regard to her Son at the time of His Incarnation and Birth, but also when she fed Him with her virginal milk, bore Him in her arms, clothed and tended Him, delivered Him from the fury of Herod, carried Him to the Temple in Jerusalem and later into Egypt: also when she brought Him back from thence to Nazareth, and when she did for Him all that it is customary for a Mother to do for her child.

According to St. Bernardine,* the Holy Mother of our Saviour merited more by her act of consent to the mystery of the Incarnation being accomplished in her than all the Saints and Angels have ever done by the whole of their virtuous actions. If this be so, what graces and merits must she not have acquired on all these occasions of which we have just spoken, as well as in the private inter-

* Serm. V. pro fest. B.V.M.

course she had with her Divine Son while He dwelt with her on earth, and when she listened to His Divine preaching, but above all when she offered Him to the Eternal Father for the salvation of the human race, both in the Temple on the day of His Presentation, and on Calvary at the hour of His Death. If the Holy Spirit poured into the Heart of this admirable Mother torrents of grace to such an extent that in a certain way they may be called infinite, in order to fit her to become the Mother of her Divine Son, what must He have done to dispose her to sacrifice that dear Son, to sacrifice Him in spite of her great sorrow and love. Certainly we may say that as on that occasion her Heart became an immense sea of sorrow, He also made it a boundless, fathomless ocean of grace and sanctity.

In addition to this, who can conceive the superabundant, immeasurable flow of graces that poured into the Heart of our Lord's Mother when He visited her after His Resurrection? Picture to yourself, if you can, the terrible anguish which that disconsolate Mother endured when she saw Him deprived of life by sheer torture, and then you will understand the immensity of grace she merited thereby, if I may

say so, and which her Son Jesus gave her after His Resurrection, and on the day of His Ascension.

Moreover, consider with what treasures of grace this most Pure Heart of the Mother of God was enriched through the divine Sacrifice of the Altar at which she assisted each day with unspeakable devotion, and also by all the daily Communions she received with incredible love during the fifteen years she remained on earth after the Ascension of her Son. Some authors state that Our Lady lived for twenty-four years after the Ascension of her Divine Son, thus attaining the age of seventy-two. Others limit the years to fifteen, in which case she would only be sixty-three at the time of her death. However this may be, it is quite certain that she employed every moment when on earth in a most holy manner. How many most excellent works did she not accomplish in that time! How many truly heroic acts were performed! How many Apostles and Apostolic men were spurred on by her to embrace with generosity the functions of the Apostolate; she had learned from her Son many things which she now taught the Evangelists. How many were the Martyrs she

fortified, the Confessors she encouraged publicly to confess the Christian faith and religion, the persons she won to the desire of receiving holy Baptism. How many were the sinners she induced to enter upon a life of penance, and how many, too, were withdrawn by her from the gulf of despair. How many wretched souls did she not rescue from the clutches and jaws of the infernal lion, and how many persons were through her enlightened with the light of Heaven and the glory of God. In how many places did she not spread the knowledge of the most Holy Trinity, and how numerous were the Churches founded by her means! How often was she not found ready to sacrifice herself for the interests of God and to suffer all the torments and deaths imaginable for His honour and the salvation of souls! What tears did she not shed because God was not only so little known and loved on earth, but was also so much offended and outraged there. How many acts of love—of the most pure and ardent love—did not her virginal Heart send up to Heaven every hour, and every moment of that hour. With what fervour and perfection did she not practise every virtue and do all her actions, even the least, for the

love of her Creator! O, holy Virgin! can we wonder that even God, when contemplating thy steps in the ways of grace, should exclaim with admiration: "Quam pulchri sunt gressus tui!"* "How beautiful are thy footsteps!" Finally, if that is true which so many Saints and distinguished Doctors teach, and I in no way doubt it, that being in the continual exercise of the love of God, and loving Him always to the fullest extent of the grace in thy soul, that same grace, O Mary, was doubled and increased by half, at least every hour, perhaps much oftener, what arithmetical powers, I say not of men, but of Angels would be capable of calculating all the degrees, nay, all the depths, all the seas, all the oceans, all the floods of grace and sanctity that thou hadst acquired by the end of thy life, and to what boundless, almost infinite proportions both in dimensions and fulness thy Heart had attained. Be not surprised, therefore, if I say that the Heart of our Blessed Lady is a sea of grace, and that those through whom the Holy Spirit speaks tell us that the graces of this glorious Virgin are immense, as is also

* Cant. vii. 1.

the Heart that contains them.* "When I begin to consider the immensity of thy graces and glory, O holy Virgin," says St. Anselm,† "my mind fails me and my tongue becomes dumb." "It is certain," says St. Bonaventure,‡ "that Mary's grace was immense. For an immense vessel cannot be full without that which fills it being so likewise. Now, Mary is a vessel of vast dimensions, as she held Him whom the Heavens cannot contain . . . and the immense capacity of her Heart being filled with grace, we must conclude that it was of the same proportions." Such are St. Bonaventure's sentiments.

Infinite, boundless, eternal thanks be to the Sovereign Author of grace who has given a Heart so great and of such vast dimensions to His holy Mother and has filled it with such a stupendous amount of grace as to be a very ocean of that same, and a sea of benedictions for all the true children of that sweet and lovable Heart.

O admirable Heart, which has ever been closed to every kind of sin, and raised to the highest degree of sanctity of which a

* St. Epiphanius, in *Orat. de laud. Virg.*
† Lib. de Excell. Virg.
‡ D. Bonav, in *Specul* B.V., lect. 5.

human heart is capable, I offer mine to Thee. Take, I beseech thee, full possession of it for evermore. Never suffer aught displeasing to God to enter therein, but beg Him to establish in it to the fullest extent the reign of His grace and His love.

CHAPTER III

THE HEART OF MARY IS A MIRACLE OF LOVE

SANCTIFYING grace like a mighty Queen never walks alone, but is always followed by a magnificent train of attendants. Wherever she goes she is accompanied by the three Theological virtues, the seven gifts and the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, as well as the four cardinal virtues. All these are to be found in the august Heart of the Mother of God, which contained all the graces Our Saviour acquired for us by His Precious Blood, and the virtues which reign therein shine forth much more brilliantly than in any other heart, either of the Church militant or triumphant, and this for three reasons.

1. Because, as Albertus Magnus writes, when our Blessed Lady was on earth her virtues were never tainted by fault or im-

perfection, but were each so solid and vigorous that all the acts they produced were of equal perfection.

2. Because, these same virtues of the Mother of God were never idle, says Richard of St. Victor,* but were in continual exercise, never missing any occasion for producing their acts with great promptitude, without a moment's delay.

3. If St. Teresa's desire to please God made her bind herself by vow to do always what she knew to be most perfect and most conducive to His glory, who can doubt that the Mother of Jesus, who loved Him incomparably more than St. Teresa, always did what was most pleasing to Him? Now, she was not unaware that actions done under a vow give more glory to His Divine Majesty than those which are not so done, wherefore it is very probable that she bound herself by vow to the practice of all the virtues. Such are, in general, the eminent virtues which reign in the Heart of the Queen of Heaven.

It would give me much pleasure to lay before you the wondrous perfections of each, but in order not to make this work too lengthy, I will merely speak of her ardent love of God, her great charity

* In *Cantica Cantic*, c. 26.

towards us, her profound humility, her incomparable mercy and her most perfect submission to the Will of God.

Let us begin with her love, and let us say boldly that the Immaculate Heart of our Saviour's Mother is a miracle of love. Would you know the origin and source of this unparalleled love? In the spirit of faith raise your eyes to the Father of all Goodness, to the ineffable Heart of the Son of His love, and to the Holy Spirit Who is the increate and essential Love, and you will there see the primary and eternal source of the greatest love that the heart of any creature ever possessed or ever will possess. Having seen whence comes that marvellous love which reigns in the Heart of the Queen of Virgins, let us now consider the rare perfections with which it is endowed, or at least twelve of the principal ones. It is a most holy love, wise, prudent, ardent, strong and zealous: most constant, vigilant, patient, faithful and pure. Its holiness completely prevented any the least sin from defiling Our Lady's soul, and clothed and adorned her with every virtue in a sovereign degree, detaching and separating her entirely from herself, from the world and from all that is not God, uniting and

attaching her inviolably to Him alone. It is a love full of wisdom, causing this glorious Virgin to contemplate unceasingly the inconceivable beauty, ineffable goodness and infinite greatness of the Divine Majesty, so as to enkindle more and more in her Heart the sacred fire of His love, and to incite her to reproduce in herself a perfect copy of His adorable perfections. It is a most prudent love, enabling her to discern between what is pleasing to God and what is not, so as to embrace the one and fly from the other, and also enlightening her as to which are the most fitting and efficacious means for the preservation and increase of His love. It was a very strong love, which enabled her to overcome generously all the obstacles which Herod, Pilate, the executioners of her Divine Son and all the infernal powers strove to put in the path she had to traverse in order to attain that high degree of sanctity to which God called her. It was a most ardent love, which prompted her to observe with great exactitude not only the commandments of God, but also His counsels. It was a love full of zeal for the honour of her God, causing her to feel keenly and with deep sorrow the injuries and offences committed

against His Divine Majesty, and disposing her to suffer all imaginable torments in order to repair them. It was a most constant love, which never suffered any diminution or falling away, not only always maintaining its strength and vigour, but continually increasing therein. It was a very vigilant love, making the Mother of our Saviour watch unceasingly over her thoughts, words and actions, over all the faculties of her soul, over all her senses both interior and exterior, and over all her duties and obligations in order to guard against there being aught in her that could displease God, and to ensure everything, both in her body and soul, being employed solely for His glory. It was a most patient love, which not only made her embrace with her whole heart for the love of God all the labours and tribulations that came to her from whatever source, but also caused her to be willing to suffer for His glory all the torments of earth or hell, if such were His good pleasure. Hers was a truly faithful love, making her apply with the utmost fidelity not only to the great, but also to the smallest things concerning the honour and glory of God, well understanding what He meant to say to every faithful

soul by these words: "Vulnerasti" or, according to the Septuagint, "Rapuisti Cor meum in uno crine colli tui."* "Thou hast wounded and won My Heart by a hair of thy neck," that is to say, by the fidelity with which thou hast tried to do well thy smallest actions for the love of Me.

It was also a very joyous love, and caused our Blessed Lady to place all her joy and happiness in thinking of God, in speaking to God, in talking of God and in hearing Him spoken of, in following His every wish, in giving all to Him, in leaving all and doing all for Him, in sacrificing all for Him, in sacrificing self and her most dear Son Jesus, Whom she loved infinitely more than self, for the love of God. Finally, it was a most pure love, which made this holy Virgin love and serve God with her whole heart and all her strength, not for the priceless treasures, the inconceivable happiness, or glorious rewards prepared for her in Heaven, but through pure love of Himself, so that, had there been no Heaven or hell, no consolation nor grace, nor any recompense whatever for those who serve Him, she would still have continued to employ her

* Cant. iv. 9

whole life and all the powers of her soul and body in serving, loving and glorifying Him in every possible way, solely through love for Him. These are twelve perfections of our Heavenly Mother's most sublime love which are admirable and no less imitable. Let us then form a strong resolution to imitate them as far as we can with the grace of her Divine Son, and earnestly beg her to obtain that for us.

CHAPTER IV.

PRIVILEGES OF DIVINE LOVE POSSESSED BY THE HEART OF THE QUEEN OF THE SERAPHIM

From amongst the twelve privileges which belong to the Heart of the Mother of God, and which form, as it were, its glorious crown, we shall select for our special consideration the four following,* the first of which is that, by the inexpressible love this holy Mother bore her Divine Son, she rendered herself worthy of the very special grace He bestowed on her when He made her a partaker in His Passion and suffer-

* Bd. John Eudes gives the twelve. *Cf.* Le Cœur Admirable, Bk. 9, c. 3, § 2.

ings, in order to associate her with Him in the great work of the salvation of mankind.

The next privilege we will consider is the one bestowed on Mary by Jesus in return for her unspeakable love for Him, which is most consoling and advantageous for us, it being the extraordinary power given her to protect, bless, help, guide, strengthen, comfort, and enrich with all manner of benefits, corporal and spiritual, natural and supernatural, temporal and eternal, in life, in death and at the judgment, all those who serve and honour her with special devotion.

Another privilege of the holy Heart of Mary is that its burning love united her to Jesus with a bond of such marvellous strength that death, which broke the close union between His holy soul and adorable Body, had no power over the inviolable union which subsisted between Himself and His dearest Mother. When the cruel lance of the inhuman soldier pierced the side and Heart of Jesus while He hung on the Cross, it caused no suffering to His Soul, it being no longer in His Heart or Body, having been separated from them by death: but it transpierced the soul of His Blessed Mother, inflicting on it a deep

and most painful wound, for her love kept her still united to the Body and Heart of Jesus. Oh, how true it is that love is stronger than death!

The last privilege is that our Lady's love for her Son Jesus was so ardent and powerful that it bore upwards to Him first her soul and shortly afterwards her body, too, re-uniting and transporting them both to the arms and Heart of her Divine Son, that is, to a glowing furnace of infinite love and an unfathomable abyss of glory, happiness and indescribable grandeur. And certainly it was fitting that the Mother of Fair Love, whose very life was love, and who, while on earth, had lived in the unceasing exercise of that virtue, should also die of love. Such is the opinion of Albertus Magnus,* of Denis the Carthusian,† and of the learned Suarez.‡ Our Blessed Lady said the same herself to St. Bridget and St. Mechtilde.

"Some years after the Ascension of my Son," she said, speaking to St. Bridget,§ "being filled with a strong and burning desire to go to Him, He sent an Angel

* In Mariali, c 171.
† Lib. 4, de laud Virg., art. 3.
‡ In 3 *part. dispute*, 21, § 1.
§ *Revel*, lib. vi., c. 62.

to tell me that the time was at hand when He willed to call me to Himself and give me the crown prepared for me in Heaven. Having heard this, as a preparation, I visited, as I was wont to do, all the places where my Son had suffered and shed His Blood at the time of His Passion. After which, my spirit being one day transported and rapt in contemplation of the marvels of Divine Charity, my soul was so filled with exceeding joy and delight that, no longer able to remain in the body, it was separated from it. But to tell you the great and wondrous things it then saw, and with what love it was received and glorified by the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and the innumerable Angels that accompanied it on its way to Heaven, would be useless, for it would altogether surpass your comprehension." This is what Our Blessed Lady said to St. Bridget.

Then, speaking to St. Mechtilde on the eve of the feast of her glorious Assumption she told her as follows:* "When I was in prayer, considering the innumerable favours I had received from the Divine Goodness, and ardently desiring to render Him thanks, I found myself inflamed with

* *Lib. spec. gratiæ*, lib. i., c. 26.

a fresh increase of divine love, which brought with it an inconceivable longing to see and be with my beloved Son. And this seraphic love which was enkindled in my heart became so strong and ardent that it consumed my bodily strength and obliged me to take to my bed. Then all the different choirs of Angels surrounded me on every side, striving which could best render me various kinds of service. The Seraphim inflamed my heart more and more with the fire of divine love: the Cherubim filled my mind with Heavenly light by which I saw clearly all the great and wondrous things my beloved Son would do in the future to glorify me in Heaven and on earth. The Thrones kept far from me all that could in the least disturb the perfect serenity and heavenly peace which possessed my soul. The Dominations, regarding me as their Queen, and the Mother of their King, paid me very special veneration. The Principalities undertook with the utmost possible diligence to prevent those who came to see me from doing or saying anything that could in the least degree divert my heart from its perpetual union with God. The Powers took care that the demons should not come near me in any way. The

Virtues arrayed themselves in the glory and splendour of my virtues, in order thus to honour me by wearing the colours and livery of their Queen. The Angels and Archangels filled those who were present with the desire to serve me with the utmost respect and devotion."

Such were our Lady's words to St. Mechtilde, who, having seen St. John the Evangelist near to that glorious Virgin, recommended herself to his prayers. His reply was: "All the words uttered by the sacred lips of the Mother of my Divine Master gave me so much consolation that never did I hear any without being filled with extraordinary joy."*

CHAPTER V

A MIRROR OF CHARITY

God commands all men, not only to love their neighbour as themselves, but to do so with the same love they bear Him: for St. Augustine, St. Thomas and all theologians teach that the love or charity with which we should love God and our neighbour are but one and the same virtue.

* *Lib. spec. gratiæ*, lib. i., c. 26.

Wherefore our Lord tells us in the Gospel that the second Commandment which obliges us to love our neighbour is like to the first which commands us to love God, and the reason is because in order to love our neighbour as God wishes, we must love him in God and for God, that is, in the love our Creator bears towards him, and not for our own interest, but for the love of God and because He wills it. It is thus our Blessed Lady loves us, and with a very great and burning love. For, in the first place she loves us with the same love she has for God, in as much as it is Him she regards in us, and because the third Theological virtue which is in her Heart is the same as that which is in the hearts of the rest of the faithful and has the same object—God and our neighbour.

It is true that this divine virtue is, in a way, infinitely more ardent in Our Lady's Heart in God's regard than in ours. But it is also true that in substance it is the same charity, though in a different degree.

In the second place, I affirm that Our Lady loves us very ardently, because she does so with the same love she bears the God-Man, her Son Jesus. She knows He is our Head, and we His members, and so, consequently are one with Him . . .

on which account she regards and loves us, in some way as she does her Son, and as her own dear children. We bear this glorious title on two grounds: for, in the first place, she, being the Mother of the Head, is consequently Mother of the members: and in the second, because our gracious Saviour when on the Cross, in an excess of inconceivable goodness, gave us to His Mother as her children. It is we who fastened Him to the Cross by our sins: we who covered Him with wounds and blood, and overwhelmed Him with incredible grief: we who caused Him to suffer the most horrible and ignominious death that ever took place: and at the very time we were treating Him so shamefully and cruelly, He gave us the most signal grace imaginable—nothing less than the gift of His most holy Mother. And He gave her, not only as our Queen and Sovereign, but as our Mother (than which we could not imagine anything more to our honour and advantage), saying to each one of us the words He addressed to His beloved disciple: "Ecce Mater tua."* "Behold thy Mother." And He gives us to her, not merely in quality of servants or slaves, though that would have been a

* Joan xix. 26.

great honour for us, but as her children. "Ecce filius tuus," He said of each one of us, in the person of St. John. It is as if He had said to His holy Mother, "Here are all My members whom I give to you as your children. I put them in My place, that you may look on them as Myself, and love them with the same love that you bear Me. You see, by the fearful torments and cruel death I am suffering for them, how great is My love. Do you also love them as I do."

O Mother of Jesus, well dost thou understand what thy Son meant by those words: "Woman, behold thy son." Thou didst not merely hear them with thy ears, but they penetrated to the very depths of thy Heart, where they will remain eternally engraven. This is why thou dost look on and love us as thy children and as the brethren of thy eldest Son Jesus: this is why thou lovest us with the same heart and the same motherly love as thou lovest Him. So much is this the case that He might with truth address to Thee those words He said to His Eternal Father when speaking of us: "Thou lovest them as Thou hast loved Me."* O dearest Jesus, O sweetest Mother Mary, what return can

* Joan xvii. 23.

we make for such wondrous favours? Be pleased, dear Lord, to accept the maternal love of Thy Mother, which we offer Thee in gratitude for the priceless treasure with which Thou hast enriched us in giving her to us as our Mother. And thou, O Mother of Fair Love, receive, we beg of Thee, the most adorable and lovable Heart of thy Son Jesus, our divine Brother, which we offer thee in thanksgiving for the ineffable love thou bearest us.

Would you see yet more, dear reader, of the greatness of our heavenly Mother's love for us? Bear then in mind that the love of a heart is commensurate with the amount of sanctifying grace it contains. Now we have already seen that the virginal Heart of our Blessed Saviour's Mother is an almost infinite sea of grace. Wherefore we may say that it is inflamed with an inconceivable love for us, surpassing that of all the Angels and Saints. Another consideration, too, will show us how full of love for us must be the most pure Heart of our good Mother. It is a fact, is it not, that the nearer a thing is placed to a fire the more it partakes of its qualities? Now of all creatures none have ever drawn so nigh to the Divinity as this glorious Virgin. Wherefore, as she thus

participates, in the highest degree possible to a creature, in the goodness of God, in His love, charity, liberality and graciousness, so likewise she has in our regard more goodness, loving-kindness, sweetness and charity than any other, even the highest Angelic Spirits, could possibly have.

CHAPTER VI

QUALITIES AND PERFECTIONS WHICH CHARACTERIZE THE LOVE OF THE HEART OF MARY FOR US

In order better to understand the greatness of the love for us which inflames the Heart of our Holy Mother, let us consider the qualities and perfections which adorn it, of which the following are twelve prominent ones.

1. It is a burning furnace, spreading its flames on all sides, and in which there is more fire and ardour than ever have been or ever could be in the hearts of all parents for their children, of brothers for brothers, of friends for friends; in a word, it is a love surpassing that of all creatures, human or angelic.

2. Again, her love is like a brilliant sun

which extends its rays on all around, enlightening the darkness of those who approach it, causing us to see our weakness and failings, that we may detest them, making us recognize our misery and nothingness that we may humble ourselves, showing us the malice and artifices of the enemies of our salvation that we may be on our guard against them, opening our eyes to the illusions and deceptiveness of the frivolities and vanities of the world that we may despise them, and making clear to us the marvels of God's greatness and goodness that we may serve Him with fear and love.

3. Mary's love for us is very vigilant, and ever keeps its watchful eyes fixed on us and all our doings, in order to help, protect and guide us in all things.

4. The Heart of the Mother of Fair Love is a heavenly counsellor for all who have recourse to her in their anxieties and perplexities: an oracle full of incredible goodness, never failing to solve our difficulties, or clear up our doubts, and giving us salutary and suitable answers according to our needs if consulted with humility and confidence.

5. We may say in very truth that Mary's love is a tower of strength and an impreg-

nable fortress, for all the true friends of God, who would rather die than offend Him knowingly and deliberately: it is especially so for humble souls and those who are pure and chaste (for "like loves like"), and for those who make particular profession of serving and honouring God's beloved one, that is, the Mother of Jesus, for she loves those who love her.

6. Her love is ever prompt to succour all who invoke her. "Remember, O most loving Mary," says St. Bernard, "that never, from the beginning of the world, has it been heard that anyone who sought refuge in thy protection and implored the help of thy prayers was left unaided." "O most lovable Mary, it is impossible to pronounce thy Name without experiencing consolation, nor can anyone invoke thee without being heard and feeling the effects of thy aid."*

7. Her love is most kind and gentle, without a touch of sternness or severity. "Nihil austerum in ea," says St. Bernard,† "nihil terribile. Tota suavis est. Omnibus offerens lac et lanam." She is full of sweetness, and milk and honey are in her heart and mouth. "Mel et lac sub

* St. Bernard, in *Deprecat. ad*, V. Mariam.

† Serm. 4, de Assumpt.

lingua tua."* St. Ambrose† says she is like the manna from Heaven, containing in herself all the sweetness of Paradise; and St. Augustine calls her‡ "the promised land, flowing with milk and honey." It is to the love of her maternal Heart that we owe our food and nourishment in the Blessed Eucharist . . . for it may truly be said that, as Eve brought death into the world by the food she gave to the first man, so Mary, by giving birth to Jesus, is the cause of our life through the food we receive in the Holy Eucharist.

8. In the eighth place we may say that the love of the Heart of the Mother of God is a Paradise of delight beyond conception for all hearts that are detached from earthly goods, and attach themselves strongly and solely to serving, honouring and loving Jesus and Mary, the King and Queen of Heaven.

9. It is a most generous love, giving us a treasure that is immeasurable and infinite, which contains all the riches of the Divinity, and all that is rare, precious and lovable in Heaven, on earth, in time and eternity. For was it not the love of Mary's virginal Heart that drew down to

* Cant. iv. 11. † In Ps. xxxv.
‡ Serm. 100, de Temp.

earth the Son of God from the adorable bosom of His Father that she might give Him to us?

10. Her love is also full of zeal for the salvation of souls. It was this zeal which inspired the Blessed Virgin from the beginning of her life to long most ardently for the coming of the Son of God into this world to deliver men from the state of misery to which they were reduced by sin. It was this zeal which caused her to say so many prayers, practise so many mortifications, and shed so many tears to prevail with the Eternal Father to send His Son on earth to deliver us from the slavery of hell. It was this zeal which prompted her to give such whole-hearted consent to the mystery of the Incarnation. This zeal it was which caused her to give us our Saviour, Him whom she had nurtured, tended and reared with a care and affection beyond conception.

Finally, it was this same zeal for souls that made her offer her Divine Son in the Temple to the Eternal Father, and sacrifice Him on Calvary in the midst of such ignominy and atrocious torments.

11. Mary's love for us is most perfect, so much so that no other could surpass it in perfection and excellence, according to

the words of the Son of God: "Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends."* This the Mother of God has done in making the sacrifice of her Son's life, which was incomparably dearer to her than her own, and which was in some sense her own, she having given it to Him. But besides that, can we not say that she actually did sacrifice her life for us, when at the time of her Son's death her soul was pierced with a sword of sorrow, which undoubtedly would have caused her death had her life not been preserved by a miracle of God's power? For without such a miracle the death of the Son would have been that of the Mother.

Furthermore, we may say that this virginal Heart loves us so ardently that the innumerable wounds it received during our Saviour's Passion were less painful and less keenly felt than the indescribable martyrdom she endured at the sight of the numerous souls who were being lost and of those who would continually be so till the end of the world, in spite of the great and wondrous things the Son of God had done and suffered to save them from eternal damnation.

* John xv. 13.

12. The Mother of Fair Love's affection for us is also very solid and constant. It is an invincible love: "Amor invincibilis," as the holy Cardinal, St. Peter Damian, styles it.* All the waters of our infidelities, our negligence and cowardice in her service, all our imperfections and innumerable offences are not capable of extinguishing that love which is stronger than death and hell. It is a love which will continue its care of and goodness to us even to the last breath of our life, and will then put forth all its power, wisdom and benignity to preserve us from the snares of the enemies of our salvation.

CHAPTER VII

IMITATION OF THE CHARITY OF THE HEART OF MARY

The highest form of devotion, says St. Augustine, is to imitate that which we honour. Therefore, if what has been said above of the incomparable love and charity with which the Maternal Heart of our Heavenly Mother is inflamed excites in your heart any devotion to such admirable

* Serm. 1, de Nativ. Virg.

virtue, form a great desire to reproduce the same in your own soul by a careful and faithful imitation. For this end take care in the first place to banish entirely from your mind, heart, hands, mouth, ears, and from all the powers of your soul and body, everything that is in the least possible degree contrary to holy charity. Do not allow your mind to judge or condemn anyone, so that you yourself may not be judged or condemned. Do not suffer in your heart any animosity, aversion or coldness towards your neighbour, but the moment you notice any such feelings there, renounce them promptly, and make interiorly the contrary acts of charity. Be well on your guard against ever saying sharp, ill-natured words, or anything cutting or offensive. Hold back-biting in detestation, and determine never to say aught to the disadvantage of another, carefully closing your ears also against all that could wound charity. Mortify the passion of anger so thoroughly that it may have no part in you. Beware of showing temper in disputes or arguments, but willingly give up your own views in order to yield to those of others. Above all hold in horror that hideous vice of envy and jealousy, the detestable sin of Lucifer and

Cain. The moment it attacks you, humble yourself deeply, and be filled with confusion at seeing yourself one of Cain's fraternity. Firmly disavow those evil sentiments, rejoice in the advantages God has bestowed on your neighbour, whether they be temporal or spiritual, returning thanks to the Divine Goodness for them, and praying that they may be increased more and more.

But it is not enough that you should do no harm to your neighbour. Charity obliges you to do him all the good in your power, and our Lord has even commanded you to love him as He has loved you. Be then prompt in helping him in his needs and in procuring him all the good you can. But be very careful not to do it for your own satisfaction, or interests, nor with the expectation of receiving the like in return, but purely to please God.

Bear with sweetness and patience the defects of your neighbour as far as you can without wounding charity. Answer him gently when he speaks angrily to you. Strive to please him in every way as far as you can in reason. Inconvenience yourself sometimes to oblige him and deprive yourself of some satisfaction to give him pleasure. Keep a foremost place

in your heart for our Lord's Commandment: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, bless those who curse you, so that you may be the children of your Father in Heaven who maketh His sun to shine on the just as on the unjust."* In fine, try with your whole heart to imitate Him in the goodness, kindness, patience and gentleness with which He never ceases to treat you.

Amongst all the forms of charity have particular zeal for those which contribute to the salvation of souls. With that object in view, employ yourself, as far as you are able, in instructing those who are ignorant of the things necessary for salvation: in giving counsel to such as have need of it for the good of their soul, in charitably and sweetly correcting and warning those who offend God, and in doing all you can to procure the conversion of sinners by means of your good example, prayers and instructions.

O Mother of Beautiful Love, make us partakers in your great spirit of Charity and obtain for us from thy Divine Son the grace to practise all the above points purely for His love and glory.

* Matt. v. 44, 45.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HEART OF MARY IS AN ABYSS OF HUMILITY

To this abyss may be applied those words of the Holy Spirit: "Deep calleth upon deep."* What is the meaning of that? There are two abysses put before our eyes by the Holy Spirit. The first is the humble heart plunged in the depths of its own nothingness and kept down in that abyss by profound humility, which does not suffer it to see in itself anything but its nothingness, at the same time making it love that humiliation and abjection. The second abyss is one of heavenly graces and blessings which everywhere follow and abide with the humble soul. The first abyss calls for the second. "Abyssus abyssum invocat," because the prayer of a humble heart is so powerful with God that it is always heard. The Divine Goodness can refuse nothing to it. It is an abyss which invokes, calls for, and draws upon itself all the favours of Heaven, God pouring them out with both hands and without reserve, because

* Ps. xli 8.

humility being the guardian of all the other graces and virtues, they are safe where she is.

Such was the profound humility of our Blessed Lady's spotless Heart. From the first to the last moment of her life it ceaselessly drew down on her grace upon grace, and one degree of sanctity and perfection after another until it raised her to the loftiest height of grace and holiness ever attained. In the words of St. Bernard:* "She deserves to be honoured as the most worthy and the holiest of all, who, being the first of all creatures, humbly looked upon and treated herself as the last."

If you want to see the admirable effects of this wondrous humility in the Heart of the Queen of the humble, study her life and you will find that, like that of Jesus, it was spent in the continual exercise of humility. That was, as we know, the special and characteristic virtue of our Divine Saviour, Who preached it to us incessantly by His example, and recommended it earnestly in those words: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart!"† So also, we may say, it was the favourite virtue of His holy Mother,

* In Serm. super *Signum Magnum*.

† Matt. xi. 29.

who gave us striking examples of it in her conduct, and who continually says to us, with her well-beloved Son: "Learn of me, my very dear children, for I am gentle and humble of heart." It is the marvellous effects of her humility—of which I will cite twelve principal ones—which give voice to these words.

First, the lowly position to which she abased herself before God from the first moment of her existence in order to adore Him as her Creator and Sovereign Lord. St. Mechtilde* having begged Our Lady to let her know what was the first virtue she practised at the very beginning of her life, was told in reply: Humility, obedience and the love of God; also, that never had she preferred herself to anyone, and that she had such respect and obedience towards her parents that she never caused them sorrow in the smallest degree, and having been filled with the Holy Spirit from her Mother's womb, she had so great a leaning towards all that was pleasing to God, that for love of Him she took a singular satisfaction in the practice of every virtue. In conformity with this St. Bonaventure† relates that it was

* *Lib. spec. gratiæ*, lib. i., c. 29.

† In Med. vitæ Xti, c. 3.

revealed to St. Elizabeth that our Lady asked God most earnestly every day to grant her every virtue, but particularly that of humility.

The second effect of this virtue in the Heart of the glorious Virgin Mary was the trouble which seized her when she heard the Angel's salutation. Whence came this trouble? Was it the sight of the Archangel? No, replies the Angelic Doctor, for she was accustomed to the presence of Angels, being often visited by them. Besides, the Holy Gospel does not say that she was troubled at the appearance of the Angel, but by his words—"Turbata est in sermone ejus"*—when he saluted her as full of grace, as having the Lord with her in an exceptional way, and as being blessed amongst all women. This it was which troubled that Heart so full of humility that it could not uunderstand such praise. St. Gregory of Nyssa records in the life of St. Ephrem that he could not bear a word of commendation without sighing, shedding tears, and in other ways showing the trouble and pain such words caused him. But what would not Our Blessed Lady feel, who was incomparably more humble and a

* Luke i. 29.

greater enemy of all praise than St. Ephrem and all the Saints in Paradise?

The third effect of the humility of Mary's Heart was shown when having received the message committed to St. Gabriel, to the effect that God had chosen her to be the Mother of His Son, and consequently to be Queen of men and Angels with the universe for her empire, she replied: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."* "What humility is this," says St. Bernard,† which remains firm and unshaken in the midst of the greatest honours! Mary is chosen to be the Mother of God and she takes the position of a servant. She is raised to the highest dignity as Mother of the Sovereign Monarch of the universe, and she gives herself the name and office of His handmaid! O sublime humility! inexhaustible source of all good! It is not much to be humble in a lowly position, but to be so in the midst of honours shows great and rare virtue."

The fourth effect of the deep-seated humility of this holy Virgin was her silence after having conceived the Only Begotten Son of God. She spoke to no one, not

* Luke i. 38. † Homilia 4, super *Missus est.*

even to her spouse, St. Joseph, of this wonderful mystery which raised her to such heights above and beyond all the Seraphim; which made her Mother of God and consequently placed the whole world beneath her feet. Yet would she never have said a word of it to anyone if the Holy Ghost had not revealed it to Saint Elizabeth. Commenting on this wondrous silence, the result of the marvellous humility of our Saviour's Mother, St. Thomas of Villanova cries out in a transport of admiration: "O wondrous modesty, O unparalleled humility! What severity, what prudence, what wonderful firmness! Behold, thou art the Mother of God, Empress of the universe, Queen of Heaven and earth. The greatest possible miracle, the most incomparable marvel has taken place in thee by the Divine power, and no word dost thou breathe of it. No one knows aught of the matter, by an impenetrable silence thou guardest this great secret with the utmost care, until on entering the house of thy cousin St. Elizabeth, thou seest that God has made known this miracle of miracles. Then, breaking thy silence, thou causest to resound, even to the Heavens, thy inspired Canticle in praise and glorification of Him who alone

doeth great things: "Magnificat anima mea Dominum."*

The fifth effect of the humility of the virginal Heart of the Queen of Angels was shown by her visiting her cousin, St. Elizabeth. It is very remarkable that the first thought with which the Son of the Most High inspired His holy Mother after taking up His abode within her breast was one of self-abasement; the first impression He made in her Heart was that of humility, inspiring and urging her to set out at once to visit St. Elizabeth, who ought rather to have come to her.

O wonderful humility! The Superior places herself beneath the inferior, the inferior is preferred to the Superior. The Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God, the Angel's Sovereign, abases herself before one who is of incomparably lower position. The Mother of the Supreme Monarch of the universe leaves her house, undertakes with much toil and inconvenience, a three-days' journey from Nazareth to Hebron on foot, across mountains and valleys, in order to do an act of humility and charity. For, as the adorable Babe she bore within her took the form of a servant, and came into this world not to

* Luke i. 46.

be served but to serve—"non veni ministrari, sed ministrare"*—so His truly humble Mother did not go to St. Elizabeth's house to be waited on, but rather to render her every service in her power, which she did, St. Bonaventure tells us,† with all possible affection and humility during the three months she stayed there, regardless of the fact that she was the Mother of God and the Queen of the world.

The sixth effect of the humility of Mary's loving Heart is that which she exercised towards St. Joseph, whom she regarded and honoured as her spouse. "Is it not marvellous?" cried St. Thomas of Villanova. "Behold here the Queen of Angels, the Mistress of the world, the Mother of God, not disdaining to serve a poor carpenter, to prepare his food and to obey him as her spouse."

But that which raises her humility to the highest point of admiration is that she preferred to suffer the deepest humiliation imaginable rather than make known the wonderful mystery God had wrought in her, and the honour He had conferred on her of being the Mother of God. Unheard

* Matt. xx. 26. † In Medit. vitæ Xti, c. 5.

of humility, the like of which has never been known!

The seventh effect of this virtue in the queenly Heart of our Saviour's Mother is seen at the time of the birth of her Divine Son in the stable of Bethlehem. She, the Sovereign Empress of the universe, enters that city, therein to give birth to the King of men and Angels, and thus to provide a Redeemer to mankind: nevertheless she can find no lodging there, and being rebuffed by everyone is obliged to retire to a cave which serves as a shelter for cattle. There she brought forth the Only Begotten Son of the Eternal Father, the King of Glory, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of all things, enduring all those humiliations with incredible meekness and without a single complaint.

The eighth effect of the humility of the Heart of God's Mother was shown by her subjecting herself to the law of purification.

What self-abasement is this, O most pure Virgin? It was not for thee that law was made, for the Babe thou bearest in thy arms was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost and without detriment to thy virginity. Why then dost thou place thyself in the ranks with those other

women who are not like thee, both Virgin and Mother? What need hast thou of purification, thou who art more pure than the sun and the Angels? Why comest thou to this Temple when thou hast brought forth the Lord of the Temple, and art thyself a Temple more august and more truly His own than this of Jerusalem? Is not thy Divine Child the source of all purity, and hast thou not conceived and given Him birth with a purity and sanctity surpassing that of the Cherubim and Seraphim? Wherefore, then, this purification? I see clearly the reason. It is because thou art the Mother of a Son who has come into the world to destroy pride, the source of all sin, and to exalt and establish in our hearts that humility without which it is impossible to obtain Heaven. It is He who has implanted in thy Heart the sentiments with which His own is filled, in order that there may be the most perfect resemblance between the Son and the Mother, and that the humble Hearts of Jesus and Mary may each say to us continually: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart."

The ninth effect of the humility of the Heart of our Blessed Saviour's Mother is that which she practised during the forty

days of her Son's fasting in the desert. For we must bear in mind what has been said above, that our Lord's incomparable love for His holy Mother, which made Him desirous that she should resemble Himself as far as possible, caused Him to imprint in her Heart a perfect representation of all the states and mysteries of His most holy life. This He did while in the desert, which He entered weighed down by our sins, in order to make satisfaction for them to the Divine Justice, and there He bore the humiliation of and did penance for the crimes of the entire universe, according to these inspired words: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* Where was His Holy Mother during that time, and what was she doing? We do not know, certainly, where she was, but we can undoubtingly affirm that she was in a state conformable to that of her Son, and was, therefore, united to Him in a spirit of penance and humiliation, not exteriorly, like her Son, but interiorly, and in a way this earth is not worthy to know, but which will be manifested to us in Heaven in order that we may eternally bless and praise Jesus

* Isa. liii. 6.

and Mary for all they have done and suffered in this world for our sakes.

The tenth effect of the humility of the benevolent Heart of our Blessed Lady was shown at the marriage feast at Cana, when she obtained from her beloved Son the miracle of turning water into wine. But how did she induce Him to work that miracle? Did she use her maternal authority over Him? By no means. Was it by pressing and reiterated prayers, so as to show the power she had with Him? Not at all. She did not even venture to ask Him to do it; she merely represented with great humility and modesty, the present need and necessity, through the failure of the supply of wine, leaving it entirely to her Divine Son to act as He pleased in the matter. On this point St. Bernard speaks as follows:* "Learn from the Mother of God to practise modesty and repress presumption. She did not speak to her Son with imperious manner and raised voice, saying aloud before all present: "My Son, there is no more wine, which is very humiliating for the bride and bridegroom. All the guests are greatly distressed: let it be seen what You

* De Gradil. humilitatis, c. 22.

can do." She said nothing of that kind, but simply these three words: "Vinum non habent."* "They have no wine." Could anything be more modest or more humble?

The eleventh effect of the humility of the Heart of the Mother of Jesus was that she suffered with her beloved Son all the contempt and injuries He endured, during the time of His preaching, from the unhappy Jews, who in a thousand ways loaded Him with affronts and insults, wanting to bind Him as a madman, taking up stones to cast at Him, and trying to kill Him by casting Him down from the top of a cliff. She also bore with that same Divine Son all the ignominy and humiliations He suffered in His Passion, when He was treated as a malefactor, seized and bound like a robber, torn with scourges, crowned with thorns, rejected for Barabbas, and fastened to a cross between two thieves.

Yes, dear Jesus, Thy revered Mother shared with Thee all that shame and humiliation, for, as Thy glory is hers, so also was Thy ignominy. Yet with such great humility and patience did she bear it that she never once uttered a word of

* John ii. 3.

complaint, even to God. O Mary most humble beg Thy dear Son to give us the grace to learn from His and thy example, to suffer patiently, humbly and without complaint the injuries and contempt that may fall to our lot.

The twelfth effect of the humility of Mary's Heart is to be seen in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where it is written that after the Ascension of the Son of God, St. Peter, St. John and the other Apostles retired into the Cenacle on Mount Sion, where they all dwelt until the coming of the Holy Ghost, united in prayer with the holy women and with Mary the Mother of Jesus, who is mentioned last, not only after the holy Apostles, but after the sinner out of whom our Lord had driven seven devils. How came it that she who was first in dignity, merit and sanctity, was placed the very last? It was her profound humility which made her oblige her secretary, St. Luke, to put her thus in the lowest place, in conformity with the opinion she had of herself, whom she regarded and treated as the least and most unworthy of all creatures. Such humility is beyond all compare. She, the Queen of Heaven and earth, the Mother of the King of kings, and who could count

fourteen earthly Kings among her ancestors, treated herself and wished others to treat her as if she were nothing.

These, then, are twelve instances of the humility of the incomparable Heart of the Mother of God, but they are by no means all. Count, if you can, all the moments of her life, and you will count so many acts and proofs of her humility, since her whole life was a continual exercise of that holy virtue, without which all the others would not please God. St. Bernard says:* "I dare to affirm that without humility even Mary's virginity would not have been agreeable to God. If her purity pleased Him it was on account of her humility. It was that virtue which raised her to the dignity of Mother of God." "O blessed humility," says St. Augustine,† "which made God become a Babe for mankind, gave life to mortals, renewed the Heavens, purified the world, opened Paradise and set free the souls of men. O truly blessed humility of Mary, thou art the Gate of the celestial Jerusalem and the ladder by which God descended from Heaven to earth."

* Homilia 1, super *Missus est.*
† Serm. 83, *de divers.*

CHAPTER IX

PRACTICES OF HUMILITY

The loving Heart of Our Lady is a great and powerful preacher, which by its wonderful example preaches to us continually all the Christian virtues, but especially humility, which is the root, the foundation and the guardian of all the rest, and without which it is impossible to please God or gain Heaven. For it is not merely a matter of counsel, or of the highest perfection, since Our Lord made that solemn pronouncement even to the Apostles: "Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). Wherefore we ought to strive to acquire this virtue, recognizing in the first place the extreme need we have of it, and the impossibility of acquiring it of ourselves without the help of God's grace. Let us therefore ask it of our Lord often and earnestly, and beg His holy Mother to obtain it for us. Let us cultivate a great desire for this virtue of humility and make a strong resolution of embracing all the means in our power that

will lead to this end, amongst which the following are very useful.

Often to adore Our Lord in His humility and humiliations, thanking Him and offering to imitate and follow Him in the practice of this virtue.

Frequently to consider and honour the humility of the Blessed Virgin and of all the Saints, in order to humble ourselves at the sight of our pride and to excite a longing to imitate them, at the same time imploring their help.

Carefully to study ourselves so as to know our particular faults and humble ourselves on their account.

To be greatly on our guard against preferring ourselves to others, taking care to abase ourselves below all.

To fear the esteem and praise of men, which is the very poison of humility, and to love contempt, abjection and humiliation as the true food of that virtue, and as the most excellent means of acquiring it.

To banish entirely from our heart and mind the passion and desires for brilliant qualities and positions.

To consider that the King of Heaven, having wished to be treated on earth as the last of all men, and to bear that name and title, as shown in the words "Novis-

simus virorum,"* we ought to glory in choosing everywhere the last place, according to His words: "Recumbe in novissimo loco,"† "Sit ye in the lowest place."

To avoid attachment to our own opinion and all disputes and arguments, which are usually the outcome of our pride: "Nihil per contentionem, nihil per inanem gloriam."‡

To receive admonitions and correction in the spirit of humility, submission and thanksgiving: siding with God in the person of whoever corrects us, against self, by accusing and condemning ourselves, and not taking the part of our pride and self-love by excusing or justifying ourselves.

To consider seriously that of ourselves we are ignorant, unenlightened, weak, frail, unworthy and incapable of good, our natural inclinations being prone to evil, and tending to draw us to perdition and every kind of misery. Consequently, in all our actions and on all occasions we have unbounded need, unspeakable necessity, for the light and guidance of God, without whose grace and help we should

* Isa. liii. 3. † Luke xiv. 10.
‡ Phil. ii. 3.

undoubtedly plunge into a fathomless abyss of misery. Wherefore we should carefully avoid the smallest degree of self-reliance or of trusting in any way to our own judgment, ideas, lights, knowledge or acquirements. Neither should we rely on our experience, resolutions or good will, nor on our strength, labour, industry or any other thing in ourselves, or on aught else in this world, however good, powerful or enlightened, for our whole support and confidence must be in the infinite goodness of our Saviour, and the incredible charity of His Holy Mother.

Not to desire to be noticed, and to do nothing which might cause us to be so, but to wish to be forgotten by everyone, in accordance with that sublime maxim: "Love to be unknown and accounted as nothing."

At the beginning and end of all our actions to humble ourselves at the sight of our unworthiness and incapacity, and the innumerable faults we have committed therein, thus putting in practice that heavenly-inspired dictum: "Humble thyself in all things and thou shalt find grace with God, for He is honoured by the humble."*

* Ecclus. iii. 20.

Never to accept praise from men, but refer it at once to God—"Soli Deo honor et gloria"*—and to plunge oneself into the abyss of one's nothingness.

So soon as we notice within us any thought of self-esteem or complacency, to be ashamed at the sight of our pride and call to our aid the King of the humble.

To turn our eyes from the failings and imperfections of others to fix them on our own.

When we see the faults of others or hear them mentioned to humble ourselves, remembering how true it is that there is no crime committed in this world of which we should not be capable if God did not preserve us from it; and say with St. Augustine: "Lord, may I see Thee in all that is good and see myself in all that is bad."

To be ready to acknowledge our faults when admonished, even if we do not see them, attributing that blindness to our pride which hides them from us.

To love correction, not only from our Superiors, but from anyone, and instead of excusing ourselves, to share the opinion of those who admonish or reprove us.

* 1 Tim. i. 17.

If complained of, or if any dispute or difference with others arise, not to justify or excuse ourselves, but act on the side of charity and humility by joining in with our own condemnation and so appearing to have been in the wrong. Above all, to side with God against ourselves in the Sacrament of Penance, only approaching it in order to humble, accuse, condemn, and be ashamed of ourselves before His Divine Majesty, regarding ourselves as criminals deserving of everlasting confusion in hell.

To receive humiliations and tribulations, not as trials sent by God to prove and sanctify us, but as just chastisements for our sins and a means of repressing our pride.

Never to pose as a master, a teacher, or an adept in any science, still less in spiritual matters.

Not to speak of ourselves or our actions, good or bad, nor of our relations and what belongs to us, except when the interests of God or charity to our neighbour require it.

Not to control the actions of others nor to speak disadvantageously of anyone, but on the contrary to approve and praise what is good wherever we find it.

To love and embrace whole-heartedly the shame and confusion entailed by our faults, although we must detest the faults themselves.

Not to be troubled and discouraged by our failings, for such discouragement very often springs from our pride, but try to regain by a contrite and humble spirit what we have lost by our cowardice and infidelity.

To fly as from the very poison of humility, from every style of speech that is self-assertive and unbecoming, too solemn and magisterial, inflated or affected, all words that would make you be regarded as saintly or learned, courtly or of good family, or as one who had been honoured in the world, employed in affairs of importance, familiar with the great, loved by the good, or possessed of any other distinction.

Not to despise or cause pain to anyone, however little or lowly he be, either by word or deed, or in any other way.

Never to expect a return for good we have done to another, or any token of gratitude, but to believe that we owe everything to everyone, and that no one owes us anything.

Never to let a complaint pass our lips

concerning the misfortunes that happen to us, considering that we deserve immeasurably more than all the evils that could ever befall or be inflicted on us.

To be firmly convinced that we have no more dangerous counsellor than *self*, and therefore to be suspicious of all our opinions and sentiments, fearing more our own judgment than all the wicked spirits of hell. Hence we should be very ready to prefer the opinions and ideas of others to our own.

Finally, the highest point of perfect humility consists in an absolute dependence on and entire submission to the holy Will of God and our Superiors in all that concerns us, and cordially to love abjection and self-contempt—not an affected contempt, but simple abandonment to God, being totally indifferent as to whether we are liked or disliked, honoured or despised, esteemed or the reverse.

O Queen of the humble, thou seest how far we are from possessing true and perfect humility. Beg thy Divine Son to pardon us all the faults we have committed against that virtue. Offer Him thy most humble Heart to supply for our deficiencies, and in reparation for our failings, and obtain for us from His goodness the

graces we need to begin earnestly and faithfully to imitate the humility of the most lovable Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

CHAPTER X

THE HEART OF MARY IS THE THRONE OF MERCY

In the Eternal Father we adore two great and ineffable perfections which are infinitely glorious and precious in His eyes, and which will be, through endless ages, the object of our praise and adoration in Heaven. The first is His Divine Paternity. Being the Father of His well-beloved Son, He is so also of all the members of that same Son, which gives us a right of priceless value and honour, that of calling Him Father, and of addressing Him in those words so full of unspeakable consolation: Our Father, Who art in Heaven.*

The second perfection of this good and most merciful Father is that of which He speaks in the Scriptures when He calls Himself the "Father of Mercies, and the God of all Consolation,"† to show us that He carries all our miseries in His Heart,

* Matt. vi. 9. † 2 Cor, i. 3.

so to speak, that they touch Him deeply ("being inwardly touched with sorrow of heart,"* as the words of Holy Writ express it), so that if He were capable of suffering He would feel inexpressible sorrow, and His desire to deliver us from them and to make us sharers in His eternal happiness is infinite. Now, as the Eternal Father has communicated a participation of the first of these two adorable perfections to our Blessed Lady by making her the Mother of His Son Jesus, and consequently Mother of the members of that dearly beloved Son, so He has also caused her to participate in the second by giving her, through the mouth of His Church, the name and quality of Mother of Mercy and Consoler of the Afflicted, in order that she also, like Himself, may bear our miseries in her heart and be our comfort in sorrow. Wherefore this most gracious Father said one day to St. Catherine of Siena, as recorded in her life, written by her confessor, Blessed Raymond: "A privilege My Goodness has given to Mary, the Mother of My Son, is that, on account of His having become incarnate in her, whoever has

* "Tactus dolore cordis intrinsecus," Gen. vi. 6.

recourse to her with devotion, no matter how great a sinner he may have been, will not fall into the eternal possession of the devil, for I have chosen and prepared her, and placed her in the world to draw sinners to Myself by means of her."

We may therefore truly say that the most gracious Heart of the Blessed Virgin is the throne of mercy, for as the Mercy of God is above all His works, so the mercy of the Mother of God has established its throne in her virginal Heart there to reign with greater lustre than all her other virtues. "The reason why many do not turn to God," says St. Bernard, "is because they imagine Him to be full of harshness and severity, whereas He is all sweetness and benignity: they picture God as terrible and implacable, who nevertheless is full of love and mercy." O men of little faith, why do you fear He will not pardon your sins, when He has fastened them with His hands to the Cross? Why are you apprehensive of appearing before Him? He is your Brother. . . . Mary has given Him to you as such. But perhaps it is the thought of His Divine Majesty and the fact that, though He became Man He yet never ceased to be God, which makes you fearful. Then,

if you want an advocate to plead your cause with Him, have recourse to Mary. She will always find grace in His sight.*

"Great was the mercy of Mary towards the miserable when she was in the world of exile," says St. Bonaventure. "But greater still is her mercy now she is reigning happily in Heaven. She shows this by her innumerable benefits towards mankind of whose many miseries she has so clear a knowledge. Without examining into their past merits, she hears the prayers of all, and opens to them her merciful Heart through pure charity, relieving the needs and necessities of each with incomparable tenderness and affection."

Mary has so won the Heart of God, the God of Divine Mercy, that He has given her the keys of His treasury and made her absolute Mistress of it. "She is called the Queen of Mercy," says St. Bernard, "because she opens the depths of the treasures of Divine Mercy to whom she wills, when she wills and as she wills. . . ." If then you desire to experience the effects of the unparalleled mercy of Our Lady's benevolence, acknowledge in the first place the depths of your misery,

* Serm *de Aquæ ductu*, seu in Nativ. B.M.

and that, although utterly unworthy of it, you have unspeakable need of help from the Mother of Mercy.

Secondly, invoke her with very great confidence in all your necessities; and thirdly, if you want her Heart to be full of loving-kindness towards you, let yours be full of tenderness for others, and readily devote yourself to the spiritual as well as the corporal works of mercy, as far as God puts it in your power to do so; and if you are unable, have at least the good will, and beg God to give the same to those who have the means you lack, at the same time showing your neighbour you are really distressed at being unable to help him in his needs as you would wish to do. In this way you will never repel anyone or refuse assistance to whomsoever it may be, but will show mercy to all who have recourse to you, and give an alms to all the poor who ask it, if not in one way, at least in another. If you cannot give money, you can give a word of comfort or instruction, or say, then and there, a "Hail Mary" for them, or at least raise your heart to the Mother of Mercy, saying on behalf of the person in question and of all others in affliction: "Comforter of the afflicted, pray for us."

Be not content with merely external acts of mercy, but try to do them with a pure intention, solely to please God and to glorify Him: also with holy dispositions, such as affability, sweetness, cheerfulness and promptitude. "The Lord loveth the cheerful giver," and "he who giveth quickly giveth twice." "Defer not to give to him that is in distress," says the Holy Spirit, "and say not to thy friend: Go and come again, to-morrow I will give to thee, when thou canst give at present." (Prov. iii. 28.)

Do not always wait till you are asked, but sometimes forestall the wants of your brethren, as God so often does with you, giving you many graces never asked for or even dreamed of by you. Exhort and spur others on, too, to practise these things when occasion offers. Finally, remember there will be judgment without mercy for those who are not merciful, whereas on the contrary, mercy without judgment awaits those who love and practise that virtue. Be merciful, therefore, as your Heavenly Father and Mother are merciful.

O Mother most admirable, obtain for us this grace, we beg of thee, and implant in our hearts the compassionate kindness and

incredible charity with which thine own is filled.

*Our Blessed Lady, it is true, does not feel the same and act in the same way towards all sinners. She distinguishes between those who are in hell, whom she regards as God's deadly enemies, and those on earth, whom she looks on as persons who may yet be reconciled to His Divine Majesty. . . . This earth being an abode of mercy where the Mother of God has established the throne and empire of her mercy and clemency, her heart is so full of sweetness and benevolence towards the sinners that dwell there that the venerable and holy Abbot Blosius declares† there is not a sinner in the world so bad but what this loving Mother in her clemency is ready to stretch to him a helping hand, and open to him her merciful heart, and whom she cannot and will not reconcile with her Divine Son if he but ask for her assistance. The Venerable Blosius also says that the Mother of Mercy cannot withdraw her eyes from those poor sinners who invoke her with a desire of being converted, but that with the heart of a Mother and sister she offers continual

* Le Cœur Admirable, Bk. V., c. 2.

† In Sacell. anim, c. 51.

prayers for them to God, taking special care of their salvation: and finally he says it is impossible that anyone should perish who honours this Mother of Divine Grace devoutly and perseveringly.

O sweetest and most loving Virgin Mary, cast thy kindly eyes on all the miserable and the miseries with which this world is filled. See how many poor there are, how many orphans and widows, and persons afflicted with divers diseases: how many captives and prisoners, how many who are tried and persecuted by the malice of others, how many are defenceless against the violence and oppression of those placed over them. Besides all these unhappy ones, there are so many travellers and pilgrims in the midst of perils on land and sea; so many missionaries exposed to a thousand dangers in their work of preaching the Gospel and saving souls on the verge of being lost; so many afflicted in mind, and suffering anguish of heart; so many souls tormented by divers temptations; so many undergoing the terrible pains of Purgatory. But above all, how numerous are those in a state of sin and perdition, the most dreadful of all tribulations. How many Jews, heretics, infidels and bad Catholics who groan under the

tyranny and slavery of the devil! Look down, O most loving Mother, on this countless multitude of unhappy beings, whose innumerable miseries are as so many voices with which they cry to thee.

O Mother of Mercy, Consoler of the afflicted, and Refuge of sinners, open the eyes of thy clemency and behold our desolation: open the ears of thy goodness and hearken to our supplication. To thee do we cry, poor exiled children of Eve. Show us that thou art truly the Mother of Mercy and let us feel the effects of thy clemency.

CHAPTER XI

THE HEART OF MARY ENTIRELY SUBJECT TO THE DIVINE WILL

After the most lovable Heart of Jesus there never has been nor ever will be one in which the adorable Will of God has reigned so perfectly and so gloriously as in the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady. For, in the first place, the glorious Virgin Mary always regarded and revered the Divine Will as the source and principle from which she received her being and life, and to it she unceasingly referred all their acts

and functions as to their first cause. Secondly, she regarded and honoured it as her last end and the one aim and object of her desires, knowing well she was only in this world to accomplish in all things the Will of her Creator. Hence this was the end to which all her thoughts, words and actions were directed, and it was in that beloved Will that her Heart sought and found its sole rest and supreme pleasure.

Thirdly, she regarded and respected it as her Sovereign Ruler, whose every order was so dear to her Heart, that she would have greatly preferred to die a thousand times than to swerve from it in even the smallest degree. Fourthly, she regarded and loved it as her true Paradise in which she took inconceivable delight. Not only did she will all that God willed, but in the way He willed it. And as His Divine Majesty takes infinite pleasure in all that He wills, so Our Lady placed all her joy and delight in every wish of her God. She did not only regard the direct expression of the Divine Will, but saw it also in the will of St. Joseph, her holy Spouse, in the edicts of the Emperor Augustus, who was a pagan and idolator: in all the prescriptions of the Law of Moses and in every

arrangement of Divine Providence, whether it concerned her Son, or herself, or others in general, submitting to it with as much affection in such cases as when it came directly from God.

Although this peerless Virgin was not obliged to obey anyone but her Creator alone, being the Mother of God, and consequently Queen of Heaven and earth, she had the right to command all creatures, nevertheless she practised most prefectly that which the Holy Spirit was to teach us long afterwards by the mouth of St. Peter in the words: "Be ye subject to every human creature for God's sake."* For she was always ready to submit, not only to her Superiors but also to her equals and even to her inferiors, doing the will of another rather than her own as far as might be without displeasing God.

What more shall I say? Well, this, that Our Blessed Lady had such love for the most sweet Will of her God that it was truly the life of her soul, her mind and her heart, causing her to lead a truly heavenly life. It animated all the powers of her soul, and all her senses both interior and exterior. It was the ruling principle of her actions, and caused her to embrace

* 1 Pet. ii. 13.

with affection every trial that befell her. Our Divine Saviour tells us that He came down from Heaven not to do His own Will but that of His Father,* and that His meat and drink, that is to say, His pleasure and delight, are the accomplishment of that adorable Will in all things.† Cannot His holy Mother also say with truth in imitation of her Divine Son, "I am in this world only to do the Will of my Creator, and my greatest pleasure is to follow it in all things."

I find in the works of St. Gertrude that she said one day to her Divine Spouse: "I pray and desire with my whole heart, O Lord, that Thy most holy Will may be accomplished in me and in all Thy creatures, in whatever way is most pleasing to Thee."‡ If a Saint had such a love for the Will of her Divine Spouse, what can we say or think of the Queen of all Saints who had more love than all men and Angels together for every wish of Him Who is her God, her Creator, and her Son? So great was her love for the Divine Will that God might well say to her what He said of His Church by the mouth of the Prophet Isaias: "Thou shalt be called

* John vi. 38. † John iv 14.
‡ *Legat. div. piet.*, lib. iii., c. 11.

My pleasure in her," that is to say, Thou art My Love, My Spouse, My Well-beloved, in whom I take My pleasure and delight, because thou hast so loved My Divine Will as to be perfectly one with it. Finally, the adorable Will of God dwelt in the Heart of Our Lady as in its own home, of which it always kept the key, and in which it ruled absolutely. It was there as in its kingdom, reigning supreme and with great magnificence, or as in a chariot of victory, triumphing gloriously over all its enemies. Her Heart was a Heaven in which the Divine Will gloried, finding no opposition therein nor aught but what was wholly submissive to its commands, where all was according to its good pleasure and continually employed in adoring and glorifying that same Divine Will.

CHAPTER XII

IMITATION OF OUR LADY'S OBEDIENCE TO THE DIVINE WILL

OBEDIENCE is a wonderful virtue, which changes lead into the purest gold, and ordinary stones into the most precious diamonds. For the smallest and lowliest

actions when done through obedience become very great and most pleasing to the Divine Majesty, whereas on the other hand, the grandest and noblest works in the natural order, if done through self-will, are very little in the eyes of God. This is what the Holy Ghost means us to understand by these words: "Obedience is better than sacrifice,"* that is to say, a little act of obedience in the smallest matter is more pleasing to God, and gives Him more glory than even sacrifice, if the latter is performed from self-will. Obedience and patience overcome all things, and the most glorious victory we can win is to conquer our own will in order to do that of God and those who hold His place. "The obedient man shall speak of victory."† The other virtues, says St. Gregory, wage war on the demons, but obedience overcomes them. Nor is this surprising, considering that the truly obedient conquer God Himself, and to them may be applied the words addressed to Jacob by the Angel: "If thou hast been powerful with God, how much more shalt thou prevail with men."‡ "Obedience alone," says St. Augustine, "bears

* 1 Kings xv. 22. † Prov. xxi. 28.
‡ Gen. xxxii. 28.

away the palm, and disobedience alone is the cause of suffering." This is why Holy Scripture continually says and sings: "Pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis." "Peace to men of good will.* There is no true peace but for men of good will, those, that is, who have completely renounced their own will, which is very pernicious, and the source of all evil, in order to have no other than that of God, whose good will is the only one we ought to follow on earth, as the Angels do in Heaven. We should unceasingly ask this grace of God when saying the holy prayer He taught us: "Thy Will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven."† This Our Blessed Lady did most perfectly, more so than all the creatures in the universe, having never had any other will than that of God, which she loved almost as much on earth as she does now in Heaven; and in this we must try to imitate our Holy Mother, if we want to be numbered amongst her children. For this end we must, in the first place, strive to wage war against our self-will, in order to destroy and put it to death as far as we possibly can, regarding it as our mortal enemy, as the root of all sin and the sole

* Luke ii. 14. † Matt. vi. 10.

cause of all the misery and unhappiness both on earth and in hell.

Secondly, let us turn our whole affection towards the most lovable Will of God, regarding and loving It as the principle and origin of our being, as our last end, on which our hearts and souls should centre, and in which alone they will find true peace and perfect contentment. Let us look on the Divine Will also as our Sovereign Ruler, often praying that its reign may be established fully over our souls and hearts, our bodies and all our senses, and that every thing in us which might prove an obstacle to this may be destroyed. Let us regard and love it as our good Mother from whom we have received both life and being, praying that we may be ruled and governed by it in everything and everywhere, in the way most pleasing to it.

Let us regard and cherish the Will of God as our Paradise on earth, in which we shall find real happiness if we try to follow it faithfully, whilst on the other hand our own will, if indulged, will only lead us to destruction, misery and hell. Let us often call to mind that it is of Faith that all our Superiors hold our Lord's place in our regard and represent His person. In

obeying them we obey Him, and in disobeying them we disobey Him. In grieving them we grieve Him, and in wounding them we are wounding Him, and that in the very apple of His eye, according to His own divine words: "He that heareth you heareth Me, he that despiseth you despiseth Me,"* and "he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of My eye."†

Hence we should highly esteem holy obedience, and greatly desire to practise it generously, joyously, promptly, exactly and faithfully, for the love of our most sweet Saviour, and in obedience to His adorable Will which is made manifest to us by His Divine Commandments, by the laws of His Church, by the duties of our state of life, and by all those persons who hold His place.

Before leaving this subject I must tell you a secret, by means of which you will become, in a way, all powerful. What is this secret? Well, it is this. Give up your own will entirely, and have no other will than that of God. You will thus become all-powerful and able to do all you wish. I learnt this secret from St. Anselm,‡ who says that all the Blessed in

* Luke x. 16. † Zach. ii. 8.

‡ In Proslogion, c. 25.

Heaven have an all-powerful will like God . . . because they never want anything but what He wants, His wishes are theirs, and what He wishes is always accomplished. Yes, I assure you it is true. If you have no other will than that of God, willing only what He wills, and not wanting anything He does not, you will be able to do whatever you wish, you will be all you would wish to be, you will have all you want to have, the weather will be just what you want, you will be as rich, as powerful and as great as you would like to be: you will live as long as you want to, and die when, where, and in the manner you wish, because you will only want all these things as God wants them . . . and thus, in Him and with Him, you will do all you wish.

O Mother of Jesus, we offer and give Thee our will. Give it, we beg Thee, to thy Son Jesus, and ask Him to annihilate it completely, and put His own in its place, granting us at the same time the grace to place our joy and happiness in following it perfectly.

CHAPTER XIII

THE HEART OF MARY AND LOVE OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST

THE first object of our Saviour's love, after His Eternal Father, was His Cross, for it was by His Cross that He rendered infinite glory to His Father and repaired the immeasurable insults offered Him by sin. It was by the Cross that He raised His beloved Mother to the height of sanctity, dignity, and sublime glory that is hers. By the Cross He has sanctified all the Saints on earth and glorified them in Heaven. By the Cross He founded His Church, enriched it with the Sacraments and with all the graces, mysteries, and wonders with which it is adorned, and which are all so many priceless treasures. Finally, it is by the Cross that He has overcome all that is evil, and accomplished all that is good, wherefore He so loves it that the Holy Ghost, speaking of the day of His Crucifixion, calls it the day of the joy of His Heart.* This is why all the Saints who have walked in the footsteps of our adorable Redeemer, and have been

* Cant. iii 11.

animated by His spirit, have so loved the Cross that they have placed all their glory and delight in suffering for the sake of their loved and crucified Lord.

But Our Blessed Lady, being more filled with the spirit, the sentiments and the love of her Son than all the Saints, loved the Cross more than the whole of them together, and whilst she was on earth her heart was always in the midst of crosses which crowded upon her from all sides, and met in her heart as in their centre. Crosses that came from God, from men, from the Jews who persecuted her Son, from the Gentiles who crucified Him, from Herod, Pilate, the High Priests, from Annas and Caiphas, and even from her friends the Apostles and disciples of her Son; from Judas, who betrayed Him, from Peter who denied Him, and the rest who abandoned Him. Even those creatures that are inanimate and insensible contributed their share to the sorrows of Mary, as, for instance, the sun which supplied light for those who were tormenting her Son, the earth which supported them instead of giving way beneath their feet, the air which gave them breath instead of stifling them.

In the same way there were the cords

and chains which bound her Jesus, the rods and whips which tore His Flesh, the thorns that pierced His sacred Head, the nails that were driven through His Hands and Feet, the gall which filled His divine Mouth with bitterness, the lance which transpierced His sacred Side and Heart, and all the other things that contributed to His sufferings. Besides these, Mary's virginal Heart endured countless other sorrows of which we have spoken elsewhere. All these crosses were welcomed by her as coming from the hand of God, or rather from His Fatherly love and adorable Will, and were borne by her with admirable submission, patience, tranquillity and love. This, however, did not prevent their being most keenly and painfully felt by the Mother of our holy Redeemer. Such grief did they cause her that Albertus Magnus,* St. Bernardine† and several others say they would have caused her death had not God by His divine power sustained her in an extraordinary way. Hence, according to the common opinion of the Fathers, she is a martyr and more than a martyr, her suffer-

* Super *Missus est.*

† S. Bernadin. Senens, Serm. 2, de Nom. Mariæ, art. 2, c. 4.

ings being greater than all of theirs put together. They suffered in their bodies, but the Blessed Virgin in her soul, which was pierced with a sword of sorrow, and souls being higher and nobler by nature than bodies, their capacity for suffering is proportionately greater.

Then again, the torments of the other martyrs were of short duration, but those of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, were life-long, beginning at the same time as her love for our sweet Redeemer, whose future sufferings for the salvation of men she learned from the Holy Spirit and the inspired writings. Another proof that the Queen of Heaven suffered more than all the other martyrs is that the wounds and torments of each of them could be counted without difficulty, but the wounds and sorrows of the tender Heart of the Mother of God are innumerable. Count, if you can, all the labours of her divine Son Jesus during His life-time, all the outrages, insults and blasphemies heaped upon Him by the Jews, all the wounds inflicted on His sacred Body, all the torments He endured in His Passion, and you will count as many darts of anguish in the grief-stricken Heart of His most holy Mother. Add to these all the outrages

and cruelties the faithless Jews inflicted on the Apostles and Disciples of her Son Jesus after His Ascension, and you will have so many more sorrows which wrung the maternal Heart of Mary. Count again all the miseries, calamities and afflictions which she saw befall innumerable persons whilst she dwelt on earth, each of which was a grief to her tender Heart, filled as it was with extraordinary charity and compassion for the afflicted.

Finally, put together all the acts of idolatry, impiety, and the innumerable crimes committed against God throughout the whole world during Our Lady's lifetime, and you will then have so many cruel martyrdoms for her virginal Heart: martyrdoms which were painful in proportion to her love for her Creator and her zeal for His glory. And as her love was, in some way, infinite, so was her anguish so great that no tongue could express nor mind comprehend it.

Drexelius, a member of the Society of Jesus, says* that Our Lady's eyes were as two fountains of tears of blood at the time of her Son's burial, and he adds the following quotation from the writings of John Baptist Signius, an author not less

* Tom. 3, de Christ. moriente, part ii., § 2.

pious than learned: "I find in the works of St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople, that the Blessed Virgin wept so bitterly during the Passion of her Son, that after having poured forth an abundance of ordinary tears, she shed many also of blood."*

But let us hear her own words to St. Bridget: † "At the time of my Son's Passion the Angels being gathered together, and seeing the God of Heaven suffering in His humanity on earth, seemed as if troubled and afflicted at the sight of His pains. All the elements were also in trouble; the sun and moon divested themselves of their splendour, the earth trembled, the rocks were rent, the sepulchres opened of themselves at the death of My Son. All the Gentiles, in whatever part of the world they were, felt a certain amount of grief at heart, without knowing why: even those who crucified Him were filled with anguish and trouble at the very hour they accomplished that fearful deed, whilst those who dwelt in Abraham's bosom, were penetrated with such grief that they would have preferred to remain for ever in hell rather than see their

* Lib. de Sanctis Lipsanis. † *Revel*, lib. vi., c. 11.

Creator and Saviour endure such terrible suffering on their account.

"As for me, His Mother, who was present at His agony and death, no one in this world can understand the extreme grief of my Heart." O Mother of my Saviour, with good reason does Holy Church represent thee as saying to all who dwell on earth: "O all ye who pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." No, none have ever suffered as thou hast, thy cruel martyrdom far surpassed all others. But also, thy Divine Son has given thee an aureole and crown almost infinitely more glorious and brilliant than those of all the holy martyrs who regard and honour thee as their Queen and their Mother, by whom mayest thou be praised, blessed and glorified for ever, next to thy Son Jesus, the King and Sovereign of all the Saints and Martyrs.

CHAPTER XIV

MARY'S HEART REFLECTS THE PEACE OF GOD

THE Peace of God is God Himself, who is always calm and unchangeable; who is the first and sovereign principle of all other

peace; who has an unspeakable horror of all discord and dissension; who has sent the Prince of Peace, that is, His Son, into this world to quench all enmities in His Blood—"Interficiens inimicitias in semet-ipso"*—to reconcile us to His Father, to reunite us with one another and with ourselves, and to be Himself our peace (Ipse est pax nostra†), by destroying sin, which is the sole source of discord, and by pacifying all things in Heaven and on earth. "Making peace through the Blood of His Cross, both as to the things on earth and the things that are in Heaven."‡ Such is the peace of God which, according to St. Denis,§ is called by St. Justus, the *Silence of God.* Now, this adorable peace has impressed its likeness on the Heart of the Mother of Peace in a most perfect manner. For, in the first place, sin, which is the sole enemy of peace and the one cause of all trouble, has never in the smallest degree touched that most pure heart.

Secondly, Divine grace which always reigned supreme in the Heart of the

* Eph. ii. 16. † Eph. ii. 14. ‡ Col. i. 20.

§ "De ipsa igitur divina pace ac silentio, quam Sanctus Justus vocat insonantium."—*De divin. Nominil.*

Mother of Grace, ever kept all her passions, senses, and other faculties of her soul and body, under the control of reason and the laws of God.

Thirdly, the profound humility of the Heart of Mary made her to be so passionately in love with contempt and humiliations that they in no way disturbed her peace.

Fourthly, her very special affection for holy Poverty made her endure calmly all the suffering and inconvenience it entailed.

Fifthly, the ardent love for the Cross which inflamed her heart caused her to find her repose in labours and sufferings.

Sixthly, the invincible patience with which she was ever armed in the midst of the troubles, changes and storms of this miserable life, preserved her always in a state of profound peace.

Seventhly, the inconceivable charity with which her kindly and benevolent Heart was filled in man's regard, not only prevented her entertaining the smallest resentment, aversion or coldness, even towards those who betrayed, sold and crucified her beloved Son, but caused her to offer Him anew in sacrifice to the Eternal Father in expiation of their crimes and to obtain the re-establishment of peace

between God and man. On this account the Holy Spirit makes her say that she has found the precious treasure of that peace which man had lost by sin: "I am become in His presence as one finding peace" (Cant. viii. 10).

Eighthly, Mary's virginal Heart having never had any other will but God's, she always possessed the peace of God in a supereminent degree. In fact, that divine virtue so permeated and filled her tranquil heart as to make it an asylum of peace, and a source of serenity and repose for all who, being agitated and disturbed by the tempests of affliction, the tumult of their passions, or the storms of temptation, have recourse with humility and confidence to her incomparable goodness for the help they need. You know, my dear brother, that the richest treasure you can possibly have on earth is peace of heart. It is a treasure brought us from Heaven by the King of Peace, an inheritance which He purchased for us by His Blood, the gift bequeathed us by His last testament when about to depart for Heaven: "My peace I leave you, My peace I give you,"* that peace which He commanded us to love, to seek for and to preserve. "Pacem dili-

* John xiv. 27.

gite* Inquire pacem et persequere eam."†

Do you wish to keep this precious treasure in your heart? Do you want to taste the ineffable sweetness of true peace? Then, at once, without delay, give yourself unreservedly to God, and devote yourself to the practice of the following points for love of Him. 1. Banish entirely from your soul the sworn enemy of peace, which is sin. 2. Strive in good earnest to mortify and exterminate in yourself all the allies of that dread monster, which are your self-love, your own judgment, your self-will, your unmortified senses and unruly passions, particularly those which most usually deprive you of your peace of mind. 3. Never suffer in your heart the smallest aversion, or the slightest coldness in regard to your neighbour, but diligently use all the means in your power to live in peace with everyone, in obedience to that heavenly injunction: "If it be possible, as much as is in you, having peace with all men."‡ 4. Hearken to and imprint on your heart those inspired words uttered by an Angel at the birth of the God of Peace: "Peace to men of

* Zach. viii. 19. † Ps. xxiii. 15.
‡ Rom. xii. 18.

good will."* What, I ask, is a man of good will? It is one whose will is entirely free from the malice of sin, one whose will, actuated by divine grace, employs all its power to bring every faculty of soul and body into conformity with the laws of that great leader; it is one whose will breathes naught but goodness, sweetness, and kindliness towards its neighbour, and is altogether determined to imitate the humility, patience, love of poverty and the Cross with which the Heart of the Mother of Peace was ever filled: finally; it is one who makes profession of treating his own will as his greatest enemy, and of studying continually the most adorable Will of God in order to love and adore it in everything, and to embrace all its orders with joy.

Such is a man of good will, who will possess true peace. Would you share it with him, be like him a man of good will, and the peace of God will fill your heart with indescribable joy — Pax Christi exultet in cordibus vestris (Coloss. iii, 15), and you will find that the repose and tranquillity of a peaceful conscience cannot be conceived by any mind or expressed by any tongue. As St. Paul says: "It sur-

* Luke ii. 14.

passeth all understanding." (Phil iv. 7.) This holy peace will change your heart into a paradise on earth, making it the abode of God, for where peace is, there is God, according to the inspired words: "His place is in peace." (Ps. lxxv. 3.)

PART III

REASONS FOR HONOURING THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

I

We ought to love and honour those whom God loves and honours, and by whom He is loved and glorified. Now, after the most adorable Heart of Jesus there has never been a heart, either in Heaven or on earth, which has been so much loved and honoured by God, or which has rendered Him so much glory and love, as the most pure Heart of Mary, Mother of our Saviour.

II

Who can describe the extent to which this incomparable Heart of the Mother of God is fired with love for her Son, Jesus! Count, if you can, every thought she has had, every word she has said, every action she has done, all the labours, watchfulness and care she expended in clothing, feeding, nurturing and tending, our Divine Saviour, and you will then have counted

up the number of reasons that oblige us to love and praise this most lovable Heart of the Mother of Jesus.

III

Count up, also, all the thoughts, sentiments, and affections that have filled her maternal Heart with regard to our salvation, and you will count again so many more obligations we have to love and honour her.

IV

Call to mind all the means that the Mother of Mercy has made use of in order to co-operate with her Son Jesus in the great work of the Redemption of the world, that is to say, her prayers, fasts, mortifications and tears, her sufferings, and the most painful sacrifice she made of this same Son at the foot of the Cross, her Heart all the while on fire with love and charity, and know that all these things are again so many obligations for us to love and revere her Immaculate Heart.

V

The holy Name of Mary has always been so much honoured in the Church that

according to Surius,* St. Gerard, Bishop of Pannonia, ordered his diocesans to prostrate on the ground when that holy Name was uttered. Peter of Blois recounts† that in his time it was a universal custom in the Church that whenever the holy Name of Mary was pronounced, every one placed themselves on their knees, giving vent at the same time to signs of extraordinary fervour and devotion. This devotion still exists, for the feast of the Holy Name of Mary is celebrated in many Churches, especially in the Order of the Redemption of Captives, where also its Office is said every Saturday not occupied with an Office of nine lessons. If the revered *Name* of Mary is worthy of such veneration, what honour should we not render to her holy Heart?

VI

As holy Church ceases not to sing day after day, when addressing the Divine Son of Mary: "Beatus venter qui te portavit"‡ "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee

* 22 Octobre. † Serm. de Assumpt.

‡ Luke xi. 27.

suck," what honour and what praise are not due from us to the revered *Heart* of His holy Mother?

VII

According to the Apostle St. Paul,* the hearts of the faithful are the abode and dwelling-place of Jesus, and as Jesus Himself assures us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, dwell in the hearts of those who love God,† who can doubt but that the ever Blessed Trinity always resided in a wondrous manner in the virginal Heart of her who is the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, and the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, and who loved God more than all other creatures combined. This being so, with what devotion ought we not to honour her Most Pure Heart?

VIII

If we have obligations of gratitude to the holy Evangelists for having left us in writing the life of our Divine Redeemer and the mysteries of our redemption, how much more do we owe to His holy Mother

* Eph. iii. 17. † John xiv. 23.

for having preserved that precious treasure for us by imprinting it on her maternal Heart?

IX

Was it not we, miserable sinners that we are, who by our innumerable sins pierced the innocent Heart of Mary with a thousand darts at the time of our Saviour's Passion? Are we not therefore obliged to render her all the honour in our power in order to make up, at least in some slight degree, for the bitter anguish we caused her?

X

Mary's admirable Heart is the perfect image of the Divine Heart of Jesus. It is the model and example for our hearts, and all their happiness, perfection and glory consist in their becoming so many living images of Our Lady's Heart, as hers perfectly portrayed the adorable Heart of Jesus. For this reason it is very good and useful to exhort others to be devout to the most august Heart of the Queen of Heaven. For, as St. Augustine says* the highest devotion consists in imitating that

* *De Civit*, lib. viii., c. 17.

which we honour. Who does not see that in exhorting the faithful to devotion to the most lovable Heart of the Mother of God, we are exhorting them to imitate the supereminent virtues with which it is adorned, to engrave its image in their hearts and to make themselves worthy children of such a Mother.

XI

Not only is the Heart of our Divine Redeemer's Mother the prototype and example for ours, but in virtue of her being Queen of the universe, it has also, after the adorable Heart of Jesus, sovereign empire over all hearts, so that they ought not only to regard it as their model, but should render it homage as to their Sovereign.

XII

Finally, ponder over all the qualities and perfections of the Heart of the Mother of Fair Love, and you will find in each a reason for rendering it the honour, love, and praise that are its due.

VARIOUS WAYS OF HONOURING THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

1. If you desire to give great pleasure to the virginal Heart of Our Lady which is so full of zeal for the salvation of your soul, hearken and do what our Lord says to you in these words: "Child, give Me thy Heart,"* and in those others: "Be converted to Me with all your heart."† For this end make a strong and firm resolution of fulfilling the promise you made to God in your baptism of renouncing the devil, his works, and his pomps, which are the world, and to follow our Lord in His doctrine, His ways, and His virtues.

In order to turn to God not only heartily, but with your whole heart, cherish a great desire, and beg of Him the grace to put it in practice—of converting and directing all the passions of your heart towards His Divine Majesty, using them solely for His glory. Take, for example, the passion of love—loving naught but God, and our neighbour in God and for God: the passion of hatred—hating only sin and all that leads to sin: the passion

* Prov. xxiii. 26. † Joel, ii. 12.

of fear—fearing nothing in this world but to displease God: the passion of sadness—suffering naught to sadden you except the offences you have committed against God: the passion of joy—placing all your joy in loving and serving God and in following His holy Will in everything and everywhere: and so of all the rest.

2. In order that our Lord may have entire possession of your heart, hearken to and carry out in practice these holy words: Hoc sentite in corde vestro quod et in corde Mariæ. Bear in your heart the sentiments that are found in that of Mary, Mother of Jesus, which are chiefly as follows: *(a)* A great horror and loathing of all kinds of sin. *(b)* An intense hatred of and contempt for this corrupt world and all worldly things. *(c)* A genuinely lowly estimate of self, and even contempt and hatred of self. *(d)* A profound sentiment of esteem, respect, and love for all relating to God and His Church. *(e)* Great veneration and affection for the Cross, that is to say, for privations, humiliations, mortifications and sufferings, which are the richest treasures of the Christian soul in this world, according to those inspired words: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into divers

tribulations,"* so that you may be able to say with St. Paul: "Far be it from me to glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."†

3. One of the most useful and important ways of honouring the Heart of the Queen of all virtues is to study to imitate her, and to reproduce in your heart a living image of her sanctity, her sweetness and meekness, her humility, purity, devotion, wisdom and prudence, her patience, obedience, vigilance, fidelity, love, and all her other virtues.

4. Often give your heart to her, who is the Queen of all hearts consecrated to Jesus, and beg her to take full and entire possession of it, in order to give it without reserve to Her Son, to imprint on it the sentiments mentioned above, to adorn it with the virtues of which we have been speaking, and to make it like unto the Heart of her Son and of His Mother.

5. To assist the poor, widows, orphans and strangers, is most pleasing to the merciful Heart of the Mother of God, as is also to protect the defenceless, console the afflicted, to visit the sick and imprisoned, and to practise other similar works of mercy.

* Jas. i. 2. † Gal. vi. 14.

6. The greatest joy we can give to the maternal Heart of Mary, all on fire as it is with love for souls who have cost the Precious Blood of her Son, is to labour with zeal and affection for their salvation: for if the Angels and Saints in Heaven are filled with joy when a sinner is converted on earth, the Heart of the Queen of Angels and Saints rejoices more thereat than all the citizens of Heaven together, she having more love and charity than all men and Angels combined.

7. Cultivate a particular devotion towards those who are more intimately connected with the lovable Heart of the Mother of God. All the Saints belong to their Queen . . . but amongst them there are some who are connected in a more particular manner with the royal Heart of the Mother of God. Amongst these St. Joseph comes first. Yes, after God, St. Joseph is the chief object of the love of his holy Spouse, and has the first place in her Heart, for, Mary being espoused to him, her Heart was his. And not only was it his, but if it is said of the first Christians that they had but one heart and one soul, how much more can it be said of the Blessed Virgin and her holy Spouse that theirs were but one by the sacred bond of

love and charity. . . Blessed art thou, O most loving Heart of Mary, for all the affection thou didst bestow on this great Saint, and blessed be thy noble heart, O dear St. Joseph, for all the love it bore and will ever bear towards Jesus and Mary, for its tender care in providing for the needs of the Son of God and His Mother, and for the great sorrow and anguish it endured at the sight of their sufferings and of all the contempt and ill-treatment they received from ungrateful men. O great St. Joseph, we offer thee our hearts, unite them, together with thine, to those of Jesus and Mary, begging them to make that union inviolable and eternal.

Such is the Saint who holds the first place in the affections of the admirable Heart of the Queen of Saints. But do not St. Joachim and St. Anne dispute his right to that pre-eminence? No, because they themselves willingly accorded it to him, knowing well that as a bride belongs more to her spouse than to her parents, her heart, on that account, is more his than theirs. St. Joseph holds the position of Spouse, and as such is loved by the Mother of our Saviour, but St. Joachim and St. Anne have their place in her Heart as her

Father and Mother, and next to them come St. Zachary, St. Elizabeth, and St. John the Baptist—the Precursor of the Son of God, and the eldest son of his heavenly Mother in the order of grace.

St. Gabriel was the Angel-Guardian of Mary's more than Seraphic Heart. What an unspeakable favour God bestowed on thee, O holy Archangel, in confiding to thee His greatest treasure in the whole world, and not only didst thou guard it, but by thy holy inspirations and by every other means in thy power, thou didst contribute to the increase of the inestimable riches it already possessed! And who can conceive the tokens of gratitude that so generous a heart as Mary's has poured out on thee in return for thy care, and with what affectionate tenderness it was and ever will be filled in thy regard! I conjure thee, O blessed Seraph, by all the favours thou hast received from the most holy Heart of the Mother of God, to preserve our hearts from every kind of sin and also continually to increase their love of Jesus and Mary, and keep us free from all that is displeasing to them.

And what shall we say of the disciple whom Jesus loved? Was he not the well-beloved Son of Mary? Did not Jesus give

him to her as such? And when He appointed St. John to thus replace Himself, did He not at the same time give him His own love for His dearest Mother and her Maternal Heart? After that, who can doubt that the Apostle of love and charity was the most dear and favoured child of the Heart of the Mother of Fair Love? Whence did he derive that loving, charitable spirit with which he was filled, if not from the divine furnace glowing in the Sacred Breast of Jesus on which he reposed at the Last Supper, and secondly, from the maternal Heart of her whom Jesus gave him as his Mother, and with whom, like a good son, he dwelt so long on earth. It was this quality of Son of Mary, says Origen, which made him worthy to receive those special revelations from the Son of God concerning the sublime mysteries of His Divinity.

O holy Apostle, how we rejoice with thee in all the wondrous favours with which the Divine Goodness has honoured thee, and for which we render boundless thanks to Jesus and Mary! We beg of thee to associate us with thyself, all unworthy as we are, as children of the Pure Heart of the Mother of Jesus. Make us sharers, too, in thy

singular devotion to that same most lovable Heart, and obtain by thy prayers that we, too, may sing for ever its praises together with thee and all the Saints and Angels.

St. Luke the Evangelist is another who is very closely connected with the loving Heart of the Queen of Saints. He is one of the first officers of the Court of this Sovereign Ruler of hearts, being its Secretary, its Evangelist, its preacher and its Apostle. He alone of the holy Evangelists mentions it specially and with honour, and has caused those inspired words to resound throughout the whole universe: "Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart."

O blessed St. Luke, write and engrave on our hearts the veneration and love we ought to have for this holy Heart! Preach and make known to the whole world its marvellous excellence. Obtain from God that He will raise up Apostolic preachers who will proclaim the perfections and virtues of Mary's Heart, and draw all the inhabitants of the entire world to honour and imitate them.

We cannot doubt, either, that the Mother of Jesus had a Mother's heart for all the holy Apostles and disciples of her

beloved Son, and especially for St. Lazarus, St. Martha, and St. Mary Magdalen, and that they on their side had a cordial and filial affection for her Motherly Heart. St. Bonaventure says* that when our Saviour called His Apostles to follow Him, he took them to the house of His holy Mother in order that she might bear them in her Heart as her children, and that they might begin from the first to love her as their Mother. Many, too, are the Saints who have followed these early ones in their special affection for the lovable Heart of the Mother of Jesus, such as St. Gertrude, St. Mechtilde, etc.

8. Let us bear in mind what has been said above, that our Lord has given us His Divine Heart with that of His holy Mother to be our model and rule of life. Study, then, with care this Divine Rule in order to follow and observe it faithfully.

9. Not only has our Lord given us His Divine Heart and His Mother's to be our Rule, but also to be our *Heart*, so that, being members of Jesus and children of Mary, we may have but one heart with our Adorable Head and our Heavenly Mother, and do all our actions with the Heart of Jesus and Mary, that is to say,

* In Medit. vitæ Xti, c. 19.

in union with the holy dispositions and intentions with which They acted on all occasions. For this end, be very careful at the beginning of at least your chief actions to put self entirely aside, and to give yourself to Jesus to be united to His Divine Heart, which is but one with that of His holy Mother, and to enter into the love, charity, humility, and sanctity of this same Heart, so that you may do all things in the holy dispositions with which it was ever filled.

10. Another way of honouring this royal Heart of the Sovereign Queen of the universe is daily to pay it special honour by some loving act, or prayer made with that intention, in imitation of Blessed Herman, of the Order of St. Dominic, who every day saluted that most holy Heart by a special *Hail Mary*. You might also for this purpose make use of the *Ave Cor*, or from time to time you could say one or other of the hymns, canticles, litanies, or the chaplet in honour and praise of Mary's virginal Heart. But even if, in imitation of that holy Religious mentioned above, you did no more than say daily an *Ave Maria*, in honour of the Pure Heart of the Mother of God, you would do a thing most pleasing to Him

and greatly to the advantage of your soul, since the great Suarez, that marvel of learning and piety, said he would rather lose all his knowledge than the merit to be gained by a single *Hail Mary*.

11. In all your affairs, necessities, perplexities, and afflictions, have recourse to this most gracious Heart, regarding it as a refuge in all your needs, an asylum, a fortress and a safeguard God has given you as a shelter in the midst of the miseries that surround us in this valley of tears, this place of exile and banishment. Yes, Mary's most good and kind Heart is indeed "Solatium exilii nostri," the comfort and consolation of our exile. Whoever has recourse to her with reverence and confidence will experience the marvellous effects of her incomparable goodness, for there is more love for us in the maternal Heart of our charitable Mother than in the combined hearts of all the fathers and mothers that ever have been or will be. Hers is a Heart that watches unceasingly over us and over the smallest things that concern us, a Heart so full of kindness, sweetness, mercy and liberality that never has anyone invoked that good mother humbly and confidingly without receiving some consolation. Her

Heart is full of wisdom and understanding, having perfect knowledge of all our needs and of whatever is best for us. It is a most generous Heart, strong and powerful to fight our enemies and to destroy all that is harmful to us, as well as to obtain all it asks from God, and to load us with favours of every kind. Finally, it is the Heart of our great Queen, of our dear good Sister and most lovable Mother, to whom all power is given in Heaven and on earth, and who has in her hands all the treasures of her well-beloved Son, to distribute, as St. Bernard says, to whom she wills, when she wills and in the manner she wills.

12. The twelfth way of honouring the holy Heart of our Saviour's Mother is to celebrate its feast, or rather feasts, with very special devotion: I say feasts, for there are several of this august Heart of our Queen. 1. The first is that which is kept in the Congregation of Jesus and Mary, and in many other places on February 8, and in several other Communities and Churches on June 1. 2. The feast of the ardent desires of this virginal Heart for the Birth of our Saviour, called the feast of the Expectation, and kept on December 18. 3. The feast of the Sor-

rows of the holy Heart of the Mother of Jesus, which is on the Friday in Passion Week. 4. The feast of the Resurrection of this same Heart of the Mother of our Holy Redeemer, which was raised up again at the Resurrection of her Son—"revixit spiritus ejus"—and filled to overflowing with an inconceivable joy when visited by her beloved Son after He rose from the dead, on which account this feast is kept on the first vacant day after the Octave of Easter, under the name of the "Apparition of our Risen Jesus to His holy Mother." 5. The feast of the Joys of this same Heart, July 8."

These are five feasts of this lovable Heart. But there are many more besides, for all the festivals of Our Lady are so many feasts of her pure Heart. That of her Immaculate Conception is the feast of the creation or formation of her Heart, which was formed by the Almighty hand of God and filled with grace and love from the first moment of its formation. The feast of her Nativity is that of the birth of her Heart, which on that day began to live its life of peerless holiness. The feast of her Presentation is that of the public and solemn consecration of her Heart to Eternal Love, that is, to God Himself.

The day of her angelic Espousals with St. Joseph is the feast of the holy marriage of the two holiest hearts of all pure creatures, of two virginal hearts which are so closely united that they are as one, by which God is more loved than by the whole choir of Seraphim. The Annunciation is the feast of the great and miraculous events connected with the wondrous Heart of our Admirable Mother, which on that day became an abyss of marvels in which greater wonders were then wrought than had ever taken place or ever will take place throughout all ages. The Visitation is the feast of the Oracle of Mary's Heart, contained in her Canticle the *Magnificat*, which came forth on that day from her blessed Heart, filled as it was with the Holy Spirit. The feast of Christmas is that of the delight of her Heart, which was enraptured and transported with joy and love for her sweet, newly-born Babe, whom she tenderly held in her arms, kissing and nursing Him as a mother does her child. The Purification is the feast of the first public and solemn sacrifice that, with unspeakable love, her Heart made to God of her most dear Child. It is also the feast of the humility of her Heart, when she took her place amongst those mothers

who came under the ordinary law, and in the ranks of the poor, making the offerings prescribed for such. The Assumption is the feast of the triumph of Mary's Heart, the feast of its perfect and most intimate union with the Blessed Trinity and of its glorification and coronation as Queen and Empress of all hearts.

These and all her other festivals are really feasts of Our Lady's Heart, because, as we have said so often, it is the source and origin of all that is great, holy and admirable in each of them. Wherefore, the proper feast of the Holy Heart of the Mother of God, which is kept on February 8, comprises all her other festivals, it being celebrated in honour of that Heart which is the fountain-head of her sanctity, of her great virtues and mysteries and of all the glory and grandeur that will be hers throughout eternity. "All the glory of the King's Daughter is from within."* From what has been said we may judge what great and wondrous things are contained in this grand Solemnity of the Admirable Heart of the Queen of Angels.

To the above-mentioned ways of hon-

* Ps. xliv. 14.

ouring that same Heart may be added that of meditating on its signal virtues, for which reason we shall subjoin some meditations on the subject which may be used on the feast and its octave, or on other occasions.

MEDITATIONS ON THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

From February 7 to February 15 inclusive.

BY

BLESSED JOHN EUDES

MEDITATIONS ON THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

THE EVE OF THE FEAST

First Point.—Let us bear in mind that all the feasts celebrated in the Church are so many fountains of grace, especially those of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother. But amongst these latter that of her admirable Heart is, as it were, the essence and queen of the rest; for the heart is the seat of love and charity, which is the queen of all virtues, and the source of every grace. Wherefore this solemnity is an ocean of graces and blessings which, having been acquired by our Saviour at the cost of His Precious Blood and countless torments, are most precious in His eyes. For this reason He desires that we, too, should have a great esteem and singular veneration for these graces, and consequently that we should prepare, with much care and diligence, to receive those He

wishes to give us on this great solemnity, to enable us to celebrate it worthily.

For this end there are three things to be done. *Firstly.* To humble ourselves profoundly, recognizing that we are most unworthy to take any part in such a feast, which being that of a heart all on fire with Divine Love, belongs rather to the Seraphim than to sinful souls such as we are; and in our quality of sinners we cannot humble ourselves too deeply.

Then, again, we are most unworthy to share in the graces and blessings of this feast on account of the bad use we have made of those God has already given us, and by the obstacles we have put in the way of those He would have given us, had we not prevented Him. Let us humble ourselves, then, most profoundly before God at the sight of these facts, which are only too true.

Second Point.—The second thing to be done in preparation for this solemnity is greatly to desire to celebrate it in a holy manner, and therefore to divest ourselves of all that is displeasing to our Lord and His Blessed Mother. For this end let us carefully and seriously examine into all our failings, in thought, word, deed and affection; also into the misuse we have made of

the powers of our soul, and our interior and exterior senses, in order to humble ourselves, beg God's pardon for all, confess them faithfully, and correct ourselves of them.

Third Point.—In order to celebrate worthily the feast of the Heart of the Mother of Fair Love, it is not much, or rather it is nothing, if we only employ the affections of our own hearts; so, as far as possible, we must make use of all the love in Heaven and on earth. For as the Holy Spirit, speaking by the lips of St. Paul, assures us that all things are ours ("Omnia vestra sunt"),* our Heavenly Father having given us all in giving us His Son ("How hath He not also with Him given us all things?"),† we have a right to employ all hearts as our own in celebrating the praises of our Heavenly Mother.

Very particularly should we ask our good Angels and all the other choirs of heavenly spirits—especially the Seraphim—also the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, all holy Priests and Levites, and those Saints who belong in a special way to the Heart of the Queen of Heaven, to unite

* 1 Cor. iii. 21. † Rom. viii. 32.

our love with theirs, to make us sharers in their devotion towards their great Sovereign, and do their utmost to help us to celebrate this glorious solemnity worthily, as far as poor, weak, human nature is capable of doing so.

Above all, let us offer our hearts, our bodies, our souls, and all that we are to the infinite love which the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost bear towards the Mother of our Saviour, begging Them to associate us with Them in this Divine Love, and to Themselves prepare us to celebrate this feast in the way most pleasing to Them.

Ejaculation.—"Paratum cor meum, Deus cordis mei; paratum cor meum" ("My heart is ready, O God of my heart; my heart is ready").

MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF THE MOST PURE HEART OF MARY

First Point.—Let us consider attentively what is the subject of this Feast. It is the Immaculate Heart of the Queen of Heaven and earth, the Sovereign Empress of the

Universe; it is the Heart of the only and beloved Daughter of the Eternal Father, the Heart of the Mother of God, the Heart of the Spouse of the Holy Ghost; it is the Heart of the most dear Mother of all the faithful; a Heart the most worthy, noble, august, and generous, the most magnificent and charitable, the most lovable, most loved and most loving heart of all pure creatures; a heart on fire with love of God, and all inflamed with charity towards us, deserving as many feasts as it has produced acts of that love and charity. Unite to it, also, the Divine Heart of Jesus, Who had but one heart with His dearest Mother, through unity of spirit, affection and will. Add to these the love of all the Saints and Angels, who are so closely united in thought and affection with Jesus and Mary.

Such is the subject of this great and admirable feast, which is worthy of boundless veneration and praise. Desire then ardently to celebrate it with all possible devotion.

Second Point.—We should regard this feast as a day of extraordinary joy for ourselves, the Heart of our Heavenly Mother being ours by four titles, having been given us by the Eternal Father, by the

Son of God, by the Holy Ghost, and by herself; in consequence of which the love of the Heart of Jesus and that of the Saints and Angels are ours also, they being all united and as one.

What a treasure, and what happiness for us to possess such riches! How great should be our joy and delight. O, dear Jesus, what return shall I make for so many and so great favours as I am constantly receiving from Thy infinite goodness, and the incomparable charity of Thy holy Mother? I offer Thee my heart, which belongs to Thee by countless titles; but what is it to offer Thee the love of one so worthless? I offer Thee that of all Thy Angels and Saints, but again that is not much in comparison with the immense treasure Thou hast given me in the Heart of Thy Blessed Mother. I offer Thee that same Heart, which is more pleasing to Thee than all the hearts in the universe; but even that is not enough to entirely fulfil my obligations, so I offer Thee Thine own Adorable Heart, which is all on fire with an infinite and boundless love for Thyself and Thy Eternal Father. O Mary, Queen of my heart, I offer thee, likewise, this Sacred Heart of thy Son, so lovable and so full of love, in thanksgiving

for the inestimable treasures thou hast given me in thy own maternal Heart.

Third Point.—What should we think if a great King opened to us his treasury, all filled with gold and precious stones, giving us leave at the same time to take as much as we liked?

Yet this would be simply nothing in comparison with the indescribably rich gift the King of Kings has bestowed on us in giving us the most lovable Heart of His glorious Mother.

If some Pope allowed us the choice of all the most precious relics in the city of Rome, it would undoubtedly be a very great favour, but, again, that would be but slight if compared with the unspeakable favour with which Our Lord has honoured us in giving us the Heart of the Queen of all Saints.

What if Our Lord were to take from each one of us our own heart of flesh and blood and put in its place the love of a seraph? That would be much, but the gift He has made us of the Heart of His Blessed Mother is, beyond all comparison, more noble and more precious.

O my Jesus, would that the hearts of all Thy creatures were employed to praise and love Thee for this incomprehensible

favour. Mother of my God, Mother of Fair Love, may all the creatures in the universe be changed into so many tongues and hearts lovingly to bless Thee throughout all eternity; and since Thou hast given me Thy Heart, do Thou take complete possession of mine, to sacrifice it without reserve to the pure love and sole glory of Thy Divine Son.

Ejaculation.—"Gratias infinitas Jesu et Mariæ, pro inenarrabili dono ipsorum" ("Infinite thanks to Jesus and Mary for Their unspeakable gift").

Second Day of the Octave

"The Heart of Mary Reflects the Adorable Love of the Eternal Father."

First Point.—We should look upon and honour the most Pure Heart of the Blessed Virgin as a living portrait and perfect image of the infinite love of the Eternal Father. For as the Divine love of the Father of Jesus was the first cause of the Incarnation and of His Son's birth on earth, so the most pure Heart of the Mother of Jesus is its second principle; for as it was the love of the Father of Mercies that moved Him to send His Son

into this world to become a babe therein for the salvation of men, so it was the most pure and burning love with which the virginal Heart of the Mother of Grace was inflamed towards God and our souls that drew down the Eternal Son from the bosom of His Father to be born of her and thus work out our salvation.

Second Point.—Consider, moreover, that the holy Heart of the Blessed Virgin is the living image of the Adorable love of the Eternal Father, because as the Son of God has ever dwelt and will never cease to dwell in His Father's love, so He has always lived and will ever live and dwell in the Heart of His Mother. His Father's Divine complacency is a paradise of delight, love and glory for Him, and His Mother's Heart as a heaven, a heaven of heavens, in which He is, in a way, far more loved and glorified than in the empyrean heavens.

Furthermore, as the Father of Mercies and the God of all consolation, in His exceedingly great and Fatherly love, gave us His well-beloved Son at the time of His Incarnation, and gives Him to us daily in the most Blessed Sacrament, so, too, the most Blessed Mother of Mercy and Consolation, in the boundless charity of her

Maternal Heart, gave us her dear Jesus at His Birth, and does so continually in the Holy Eucharist, because being one with Him in spirit, in love, and in will, she wills all that He wills and does all that He does.

Third Point.—Finally, the Eternal Father Himself does to the holy Heart of His beloved Daughter, the glorious Virgin Mary, that which He commands all faithful souls to do when He says: "Place Me as a seal upon thy heart,"* for with His own hand He has impressed a perfect resemblance of the Divine qualities of His love on hers, which consequently is a perfect image of the sanctity, wisdom, goodness, mercy, benignity, charity, and all the other perfections of the infinite love of our Heavenly Father.

O wondrous goodness of our eternal King, may all men and Angels bless, love and praise Thee to all eternity, for having imprinted Thy likeness on the Heart of the Queen of my heart! O lovable Heart of my heavenly Mother, how I rejoice to see thee so noble, so royal, so holy, so perfect and so like unto the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of all hearts.

O holy Mother of God, art thou not my

* Cant. viii. 6.

true Mother, and am not I thy poor child, although unutterably unworthy? And should not the heart of the child resemble that of the Mother? Thou seest nevertheless, how unlike mine is to thine! O Mother of Mercy, take pity on my misery. I offer and give thee my wretched heart, whole and entire. I beseech thee by all the goodness of thy Motherly Heart completely to destroy in that of thy unworthy child all that is displeasing to thee, and imprint in it a perfect image of the holiness reigning in the Heart of its revered Mother.

Ejaculation.—"Jesu, fructus cordis Mariæ, miserere nobis" ("Jesus, Fruit of the Heart of Mary, have mercy on us").

Third Day

"The Heart of the Blessed Virgin is one with the Infinite Love of the Eternal Father, and is the Mirror of the Heart of Jesus with which also it is United."

First Point.—Consider that not only is the Sacred Heart of the glorious Virgin Mary a vivid likeness of the infinite love of the Eternal Father, the Father of Virgins, but is one with it, one, not in unity of nature or essence, but in unity of spirit,

with love and affection. For the Mother of Jesus never had any other spirit, will, or affections but those of the Father of Jesus, and it attained to that union, or rather that unity by three means.

1. By entire separation from all sin.

2. By perfect detachment from the world, from self-love and from all created things.

3. By a most ardent love for the Divine Will, and by a prompt and cordial submission and abandonment to all its designs and orders.

O dearest Mother, I rejoice unspeakably to see thy Blessed Heart thus united and conformed to the Adorable Will of our Heavenly Father, and render Him infinite thanks that it is so. To thee, my great and powerful Queen, I offer my heart. Make it to share thy boundless hatred of sin; sever the bonds and break the chains that bind this poor slave; detach me entirely from the world, from self-will and from all that is displeasing to God. Consecrate me to His Divine Will, praying that it may be established in my heart, and reign therein absolutely for evermore, so that in imitation of thee I may be one in mind, will and heart with my loving Heavenly Father.

Second Point.—Consider that the Heart of the Mother of our Divine Saviour is as a beautiful mirror in which her beloved Son has depicted, traced and represented in an excellent manner, all the virtues that reign in His Sacred Heart, so that they who see the Heart of the Queen of Angels, as the Angels do, find therein a vivid and perfect reproduction of the love, charity, humility, obedience, patience, purity, contempt of the world, hatred of sin, and all the other virtues of the most adorable Heart of Jesus. From the very depths of your own heart, then, return Him thanks for this, and offer it to our Blessed Lady, earnestly begging her to obtain that as her Heart is a living portrait of that of her Son Jesus, yours may be in like manner an image of hers.

And you, on your part, cultivate a great desire to see that virginal heart, on which, as on a beautiful mirror, you should often fix your eyes that you may see the stains on your soul, in order to efface them and engrave on your heart by an earnest imitation all the virtues which shine forth in the peerless Heart of your Heavenly Mother, especially humility, obedience and charity; for all the happiness, perfection and glory of our hearts consist in so living

that we may be vivid reproductions of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Third Point.—Although the Heart of Jesus is distinct from that of Mary, which it also infinitely surpasses in excellence and holiness, yet God has so closely united these two Hearts that we may say with truth that they are but one, because they have always been animated with the same spirit and filled with the same sentiments and affections. If St. Bernard could say he had but one heart with Jesus: "Bene mihi est, cor unum cum Jesu habeo,"* and if it was said of the first Christians that they had but one heart and one soul, so great was the union amongst them, how much more can we say that Jesus and Mary had but one heart and one soul, considering how closely they were bound together by the perfect conformity of mind, will and sentiment that existed between such a Son and such a Mother.

Add to this that Jesus so lives and reigns in Mary that He is the soul of her soul, the spirit of her spirit, the heart of her heart; so much so that we might well say that Jesus is so enshrined in the Heart of Mary, that in honouring and glorifying

* *Tract. de Pass. Domini*, super istud Joan. Ego sum vitis vera, c. 3.

her Heart, we honour and glorify Jesus.

O Jesus, living in the Heart of Mary! be the life of my heart; Mary, Mother of Jesus, obtain by thy intercession, I beseech thee, that I may have but one heart with thy beloved Son and thyself.

Ejaculation.—"Quis dabit mihi ut cor meum, cum Corde Jesu et Mariæ cor unum fiat in æternum." ("Who will grant me that my heart may be one for ever with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary!")

Fourth Day

Reasons that should incite us to Honour the Holy Heart of Mary.

First Point.—Let us bear in mind that God has given us the feast of the most Pure Heart of the Blessed Virgin in order that we may render it on that day all the respect, honour and praise that we possibly can. To enkindle this spirit within us let us ponder over the motives which oblige us to it.

The first is, that we ought to love and honour whatever God loves and honours, and that by which He is loved and glorified. Now, after the adorable Heart of Jesus there has never been either in heaven or

on earth, nor ever will be, a heart which has been so loved and honoured by God, or which has given Him so much glory as that of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Never has there been, nor will there ever be a more exalted throne of Divine Love. In that Heart Divine Love has its fullest empire, for it ever reigns therein without hindrance or interruption, and with it reign likewise all the laws of God, all the Gospel maxims, and every Christian virtue.

This incomparable Heart of the Mother of our Redeemer is a glorious heaven, a Paradise of delights for the Most Holy Trinity. For as, according to the Apostle, the hearts of the faithful are the dwelling-place of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as this same Jesus Himself assures us that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost take up Their abode in the hearts of those who love God, who can doubt that the most Holy Trinity has always made His home and established the reign of His glory in an admirable and ineffable manner in the virginal Heart of her who is the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, and who herself loves God more than all other creatures together?

How much then are we not obliged to love this exalted and most lovable Heart?

Second Point.—There is another very special motive for this contained in these words of the Holy Ghost: "Omnis gloria Filiæ Regis ab intus."* All the glory, all the grace, all the sanctity, and all that is great and worthy of honour in the Queen of Heaven takes its origin from within, from her heart, because it was by the profound humility, the peerless purity and burning love of her virginal Heart, that she, the Virgin of Virgins, won the Well-Beloved of the Eternal Father, that is His only Son, Whom she drew down to her Heart and caused to dwell within her, in consequence of which she was raised to the sublime dignity of being the eldest Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Son, the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, the Sanctuary of the Blessed Trinity, the Queen of the Universe, and has, moreover, been given to us as our Mother and our Sovereign. For this reason we ought not only to honour the most holy Virgin Mary in some of her mysteries or qualities, or in certain of her actions, nor even in her exalted person alone, but we ought in the first place and chiefly, to honour in her the

* Ps. xliv. 14.

source and origin of the dignity and sanctity of all these mysteries, qualities and actions, and even of her person; that is to say, her love and charity, for love and charity are the measure of merit and the principle of all sanctity.

It was the love and charity of that Heart, so full of both, which sanctified all the thoughts, words, actions and sufferings of our Saviour's most holy Mother; which sanctified also her memory, understanding, will, and all the faculties of both the superior and inferior parts of her soul; which adorned her whole interior and exterior life with such marvellous holiness; which contained in itself, to a sovereign degree, all the virtues, gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit; which rendered her worthy to bear and nourish Him Who supports the whole world, and Who is the life of all living things. It was the love and charity of Mary's Heart which exalted her to a place in Heaven above all the Seraphim and established her on a throne of incomparable glory, grandeur, happiness and power proportioned to her unsurpassable dignity as Mother of God.

Third Point.—Add to this that Our Lady's most gracious Heart is an inexhaustible source of gifts, graces, favours

and blessings for all who love this Mother of Beautiful Love, and who devoutly honour her most lovable Heart. In short, we have unspeakable obligations, both in number and quality, to this royal and maternal Heart of our great Queen and dearest Mother, on which account we can never sufficiently honour, praise and glorify her.

Ejaculation.—"Gratias infinitas, immensas, æternas, amantissimo Cordi Mariæ" ("Infinite, boundless, eternal thanks be to the most loving Heart of Mary").

Fifth Day

Further Reasons for Honouring the Most Pure Heart of Mary.

First Point.—Consider that the virginal Heart of the Mother of God is the faithful depositary of all the mysteries and marvels of our Saviour's life, according to the testimony of St. Luke: "Mary kept all these words in her Heart."* It is a living book, an eternal Gospel, in which the Holy Spirit has inscribed that wonderful life in letters of gold. It is this book of life we should incessantly study in order per-

* Luke ii. 51.

fectly to understand and ardently love the beauty of all the Christian virtues, the practice of which gives true life. But above all we ought to study therein the wondrous excellence of holy humility, as well as the way of practising it and of entirely ridding our hearts of the accursed canker-worm of pride and vanity which works such terrible havoc, not only in the souls of the children of perdition, but even in the hearts of the children of God.

O Mother of Goodness, what obligations have we not to honour thy most lovable Heart in which thou hast preserved such precious treasures, for which be thou blessed for all eternity. Cause our names to be written in that book of life, we beseech thee, and help us to study deeply the beauteous truths and holy maxims inscribed therein.

Second Point.—Who can describe the burning love for her Son Jesus, which filled this incomparable Heart of the Mother of God? and how studiously watchful she was in her care of him whom she nurtured, clothed, and tended in order to give Him to us as our Saviour, for which we owe her a debt of gratitude beyond all power to conceive!

Third Point.—Who could enumerate all

the intense sorrow and cruel wounds with which the maternal Heart of the Mother of Jesus was lacerated throughout her whole life, especially at the time of her Son's Passion, and above all when, at the foot of the Cross, it was transpierced with a sword of sorrow? "In the Heart of the Blessed Virgin," says St. Lawrence Justinian, "was clearly mirrored the Passion of her Son Jesus, and a perfect representation of His death."* "It was then,"† says Richard of St. Laurent, "that those inspired words were accomplished in this virginal Heart: *Omnis plaga tristitia cordis ejus*" (Eccli. xxxv. 17), that is to say, that there was no part of this afflicted Mother's Heart that was not pierced through and through with a thousand darts of anguish.

Now, it was we who brought upon her all these sorrows by our sins, therefore are we obliged to render her all the honour and glory we possibly can, in order to repair in some measure the agony and grief we have caused her.

Ejaculation.—"Per Cor amantissimum sanctissimæ Matris tuæ doloris gladio transfixum, miserere nobis, Jesu" ("O

* Lib. de Triumph. agone Christi, c. 21.

† De laud B. Virg., lib., ii. partit. 2.

Jesus, by the most loving Heart of Thy holy Mother transpierced with a sword of sorrow, have mercy on us").

Sixth Day

First Point.—The devout and learned Gerson* likens the loving Heart of our Saviour's Mother to the bush seen by Moses, ever burning with the flames of most ardent charity but never consumed. He says that it is the true Altar of holocaust on which the sacred fire of Divine Love glowed day and night; and that the sacrifice most pleasing to God and most beneficial to the human race, after that which our Lord made of Himself on the Cross, is the divine holocaust which the Blessed Virgin offered to the Eternal Father on the altar of her Heart, when she so frequently and with so much love offered Him in sacrifice that same Jesus, her only Son so dearly beloved. To this we may add that He was sacrificed but once on the Cross, but was immolated a thousand and a thousand times on the Heart of His holy Mother, that is, as many times as she has offered Him to the Eternal Father for us.

* Tract. 9, sup. Magnif., partit. 1.

O holy Altar, what veneration is not thy due, and what praises do not all creatures owe thee? Mother of Love, take our hearts and unite them with thy only and well-beloved Son as a holocaust and sacrifice to our Heavenly Father.

Second Point.—What veneration do we not owe to this august Heart of the Mother of God, which was the principle of the life humanly divine and divinely human of the Infant Jesus while He dwelt within her? For at that time the Heart of the Mother is as much the source of her child's life as of her own, the one depending on it as much as the other.

What praise and respect are therefore due to the loving Heart of Mary on which the Infant Jesus chose that His life should then depend, to that Heart which was the principle of two lives both so holy, so precious; to that Heart on which the adorable Babe so oft reposed when in His Mother's arms; to that Heart, the most noble and revered organ of that virginal body which gave a Body to the Eternal Word that will be for all eternity the object of the adoration and praise of all celestial and blessed spirits; to that Heart which, being the principle of the life of our Head, is so, consequently, of that of His members, and

being the principle of life to Jesus and Mary, is also that of the lives of their children. "Vitam datam per Virginem, Gentes redemptæ plaudite."

O Mother of Goodness, may the hearts of all the faithful unceasingly bless and love thy Maternal and loving Heart, and may it be the heart of my heart, the soul of my soul and the life of my life.

Ejaculation.—"O Maria, vita, dulcedo, et spes mea carissima" ("O Mary, my life, my sweetness and my dearest hope!")

Seventh Day

Three more Reasons for Honouring the Heart of our Blessed Mother.

First Point.—Consider that this admirable Heart is the august temple of the Divinity, a temple built by the hand of the Almighty, a temple consecrated by the continual indwelling of the Divine Spirit, a temple dedicated to Eternal Love; a temple which has never been profaned either by the smallest sin, or taint of the spirit of the world, or by inordinate love of self or any other creature; a temple in which, after that of the Divine Heart of Jesus, the most Holy Trinity is more per-

rectly adored, loved and glorified than in any other temple, material or spiritual, in Heaven or on earth; a temple within which, O glorious Virgin, thy spirit ever dwelt in retirement and recollection, in order to offer to God a continual sacrifice of praise, honour and fervent love. It is in this holy temple that I desire unceasingly to adore, bless and love Him who made and sanctified it for His glory, and wherein He will be eternally glorified in a higher degree than in all the empyrean Heavens.

Second Point.—Consider that this wondrous Heart is to the new Adam, *i.e.*, Jesus, a veritable Paradise of delights, of which He is the real *Tree of Life*, planted in the midst thereof. Into this Paradise neither the serpent, nor sin, have ever entered, and its gates have always been carefully guarded, not by a Seraph only, but by the very King of the Cherubim and Seraphim.

What delight did not the Divine Son of Mary take in that Motherly Heart which loved Him more ardently than He had ever been loved, even by the purest spirits in the Heavenly Paradise! What a joy it was to thy Divine Babe, O Blessed Mother, when He reposed on thy virginal breast, and thou wast wholly filled, pene-

trated and possessed by His holy Spirit and His Divine Love, which quite transported and absorbed thy whole soul, spirit and heart.

O Mother of Fair Love, obtain for me that I may have no other Paradise or pleasure in this world than that of loving, serving and honouring Jesus, the Son of Mary, and Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Ejaculation.—"Vivat et regnet Cor Jesu et Mariæ in corde meo in æternum" ("May the Heart of Jesus and of Mary live and reign in my heart for ever").

OCTAVE DAY OF THE FEAST

THE HEART OF THE MOTHER OF FAIR LOVE IS A FURNACE OF LOVE AND CHARITY

First Point.—We should look upon and honour the most lovable Heart of our Lord's Mother as a furnace of the love of God.

It is so because sin, love of the world and of self have never had any part therein, and because it has always been full of, and on fire with, the flames of Divine love.

It is a furnace of love because it has

never loved aught but God, and His Will, which it loved in Him and for His sake.

It is a furnace of love because our Blessed Lady has always loved God with her whole Heart, with her whole soul, and with her whole strength. All her actions were done from the purest love of God, nor had she ever any other intention in all her thoughts, words, and sufferings but to please Him, doing everything "*Corde magno et animo volenti*," with a large heart and all possible perfection, in order thus to give all possible pleasure to His Divine Majesty.

Mary's Heart is a furnace of love because it not only willed always just what God willed, and never aught that was contrary to His will, but because she ever placed all her happiness and joy in the most lovable Will of God.

It is a furnace of such burning love that not all the rivers and floods of bitter sorrows that deluged her soul were ever capable, I will not say of extinguishing, but of cooling in the smallest degree the glowing flames of that fire.

It is a furnace of love in which the Holy Spirit, Who is a consuming fire, enkindled His Divine flame in her virginal Heart at the first moment of its existence, and never

ceased to increase it more and more, from moment to moment, up to the last breath of her life.

O Sacred fire and flame of this holy furnace, come and take possession of our hearts.

Second Point.—Consider that the Heart of the Mother of "Beautiful Love" is a furnace of love in which the only Son of God, who is also the only Son of Mary, ever dwelt and will continue to dwell eternally, He Who is essential *Love* and Who is called in Holy Scripture *Ignis consumens*,* a consuming fire. Judge from this what burning flames, what glowing heat He brought with Him into His Holy Mother's Heart, where He found no obstacle to His designs. It is as if the beloved Son of Mary were in the Heart of His holy Mother as an immense furnace of Divine love in the centre of another furnace all on fire with that same love, and from it the flames reached to the inmost being of the Seraphim to inflame them more and more and even to the object of the Eternal Father's infinite complacency, viz., His well-beloved Son, who won by the love of Mary was by it drawn from

* Deut. iv. 24.

His Father's bosom down to her virginal breast.

O holy Furnace, blessed are they who draw nigh to thy sacred fire, still more happy they who are set alight by thy heavenly flames, and happiest of all those who cast themselves into that Divine brazier and are wholly consumed therein.

O furnace of love, spread thy flames throughout the entire universe, in order that my Saviour's desire may be accomplished which He expressed when He said that He came to cast fire on the earth, and desired that it might be enkindled in the hearts of all men.*

Whoever wishes to burn with this fire must strive to extinguish within himself the flames of love of the world and self; he must study to love God alone and with his whole heart; to do all his actions for love of Him and to do them well; to have no other intention, at any time, than to please Him, and for love of Him to place all his joy in the fulfilment of His Will and in the crosses that may befall him.

O Mother of Love, obtain by thy prayers that these things may be accomplished in us.

* "Ignen veni mittere in terram, et quid volo, nisi ut accendatur?"—Luke xii. 49.

Third Point.—Consider and honour the Pure Heart of the Mother of Jesus as a furnace of charity towards men; a furnace in which there has never been a single thought or sentiment contrary to that virtue; a furnace of such burning charity for even the greatest enemies that she sacrificed for them her only and dearly loved Son at the very time they were cruelly putting Him to death, and piercing her maternal heart with a thousand darts of anguish.

It is a furnace of charity for her beloved children whom she loves so ardently that if the love of all the fathers and mothers that ever were or ever will be, were united in one heart, it would be but a spark in comparison with the furnace of love burning in the Heart of our Heavenly Mother.

It is a furnace on fire with such charity and zeal for souls, that she would have willingly suffered all the torments of hell when in the world, to help to save a single soul; for if Moses, St. Paul, St. Catherine of Siena, and several other Saints have been ready and willing to do so, how much more would the Queen of all Saints, who was more full of love for souls than all the Saints together.

Return thanks, then, to the Son of Mary

for having so inflamed her Heart with that fire of Divine charity for us, with which His own is burning. Thank her also for all she has done in her charity for the human race. Desire earnestly to imitate your Holy Mother in the practice of that virtue. Examine yourself as to the faults you have committed against it in the past, in order to humble yourself and beg pardon of God, offering Him the most lovable Heart of Our Lady in reparation.

Also offer your own to that same holy Virgin, begging her to destroy in it all that is contrary to charity, and engrave thereon a perfect image of her charity towards her enemies, her friends, and the souls of all mankind.

Ejaculation.—"O Cor Jesu et Mariæ, fornax amoris, in te cor nostrum demergatur in æternum" ("O Heart of Jesus and of Mary, burning with love, may our heart be for ever immersed in you").

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